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# THIS WORK-A-DAY WORLD.

VOL. III.

TRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND COMPANY
EDINGURGH AND LONDON

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# THIS WORK-A-DAY WORLD.

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# HOLME LEE,

AUTHOR OF

"SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "BEAUTIFUL M SS BARRINGTON,"
"VICISSITUDES OF BESSIE FAIRFAX," ETC.

VOL. III.



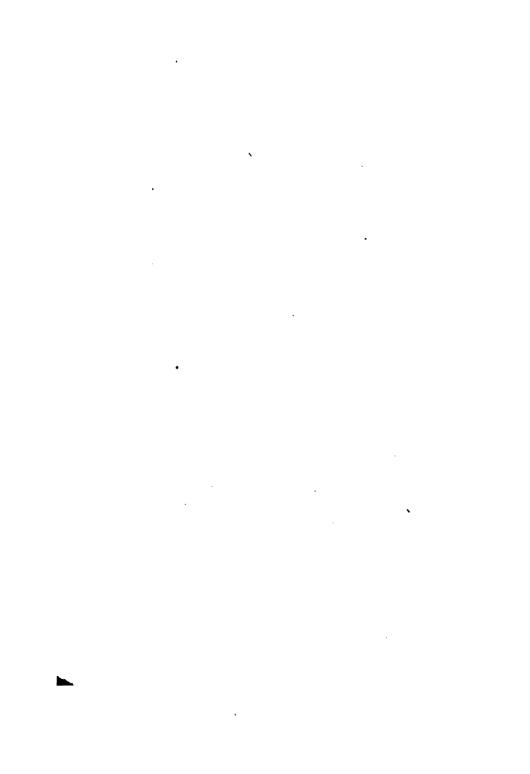
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# CONTENTS.

CHAP.						PAGE
I.	A PROBATIONARY TOUR	•	•	•	•	I
II.	a meeting by the way	•	•	•	•	22
III.	GEORGIE'S CONVERSION	٠.	• .	•		37
IV.	PLEASURES AND PAINS O	F TRAV	EL		•	55
v.	THE LIFE OF EVERYDAY		•	•		79
VI.	FEMALE INDEPENDENCE	•	•	•		103
VII.	IN THE MILL .	•	•	•	•	129
VIII.	BURRS AND THISTLES-G	EORGIE	MARR	ED	•	150
IX.	IN THE COURSE OF EVEN	TS—DE	LPHINE	MARRI	ED	172
x.	a job's comforter	•	•	•		192
XI.	CONSOLATORY .	•	•	•	•	206
XII.	A RECEPTION ON CASTLE	GREEN		•	•	216
XIII.	LIFE IN THE BALANCE		•	•		233
xıv.	SUPERSEDED .		•	٠,	•	248
xv.	GETTING READY TO GO	•				266
XVI.	THE END OF A LONG DRE	AM		•		282
xvii.	NOT SO DULL AS IT SEEM	s	•			291



# THIS WORK-A-DAY WORLD.

## CHAPTER I.

#### A PROBATIONARY TOUR.

THE reason of Miss Denham's coming abroad was to give her mind perfect freedom in deciding that momentous question, to marry or not to marry. She was almost at the end of those two years of reflection which she had required, but scarcely nearer to a conclusion than at the beginning. She felt that there was still much to be said on both sides.

Not having communicated her secret to Winny Hesketh before she did not communicate it now, and Winny was not a little perplexed at the outstart by what might be called the irregular humours of her friend. Georgie took charge of the common purse, to you. III.

manage all the business of the tour, with Tom for aid; Winny had only to be passive, and enjoy all the pleasure she could; but sometimes Georgie forgot quite essential matters, and Tom protested that it was not for him to interfere, and remind her. One evening Winny quizzically suggested that she should take the lead, being a really practical character, and not subject to hours of absence; but Georgie was so scornfully irate at the proposition that she never ventured to repeat it. Winny subsided into a blissful state of quiescence, and remained unmoved whatever happened—then Georgie reproached her as so provokingly cool. and starts Georgie was good and indulgent as ever, witty, amusing and delightful, and then, all at once, came on a cloud of vapours, chilling and uncomfortable to everybody within its Winny folded her cloak of sufferance about her, and waited for its passingthe sun would break out again by and by, and geniality would be restored. Tom always retired from society while the cold prevailed, thanks to the natural liberty which is the prerogative of his sex, and sometimes Winny envied him.

The week in Paris was not laborious. Georgie ruled that Winny must not attempt to do too much. She knew Paris well, and spent her mornings writing immense letters. made excursions in little open carriages, alone or attended by Tom, and contrived to become mistress of the general plan and aspect of the old quarters of the city which pleased her best. The new were soon learnt, and here, as in London, she thought that the streets were the most interesting show. Churches, palaces, galleries of pictures she did her duty to, but both she and Tom seemed rather glad to have done with duty when they issued forth into the busy, bustling streets again, and mounted into their little carriage to drive about. evening mostly they had open-air music.

It was decreed that the travellers should enter Switzerland by the passes of the Jura, that romantic region of pine-forests and stony hill pastures, of rich valleys and picturesque villages. Towards evening, a beautiful rosy evening, they approached Neufchâtel through a deep gorge; on one side of the road rushed and foamed a turbulent river, on the other rose steep, broken cliffs, tressed and shaded by overhanging trees and bushes. It was not unlike parts of Derbyshire, Georgie said. And then the lake stole into view, placid, steel-blue and silver-grey; and in the remote distance the spectres of mountains that seemed to come and go in the clouds of the sky. And this was their first glimpse of the everlasting hills of ice and snow.

They descended at an inn on the borders of the lake, and Georgie was soon put in possession of comfortable letters. Her mood became radiant, and after dinner, Tom having a desire to go out upon the lake, Georgie consented, and they all walked to the place where boats lay moored for hire. But the boatmen had gone home. Tom, English-lad like, was for going alone, Georgie too, but Winny said, no, she thanked them, she had heard the lake was treacherous at certain hours, and the absence of the boatmen appeared to intimate that this hour

of the evening might be the perilous time. However, Georgie and Tom would go, and left the prudent Winny—the little coward wrapt up warmly, and seated on the shelving shore, to watch them rowing and floating about. They landed all safe again, but the proprietor of the inn brought them to read a paragraph in the last issue of a local newspaper from which they learnt that they had acted with the same foolhardiness of ignorance that had cost the lives of two of their countrymen and two native boatmen only the week before. This gave them a caution, and made them more submissive for the future to the traditions of experience -a signal relief to Winny; for Tom had been prattling contemptuously of guides, and how he would not be bothered with a fudge of a guide if he went to take a walk up a mountain, and having come away from Cotham a trio, she had a natural desire to return a trio. She avowed a candid reluctance to entrusting her personal safety to confident young persons who would undertake to drive, knowing nothing of horses, and to sail a boat, knowing nothing of sailing.

Tom might call her timid if he pleased; she was not hurt thereby, nor was her actual courage abated—let him wait and see; perhaps an opportunity might be given her before long of proving that she had as good pluck and nerve as need be expected in a woman—as good, even, as his own. Tom looked mighty incredulous, but said kindly that, of course, he did not blame her for not being brave—intrepidity, and that sort of thing, belonged to men.

Winny got that opportunity the very next day. The three comrades crossed the lake in the market-boat for Morat. Returning in the evening, a breeze sprang up, and clouds obscured the sky. With rumbling of thunder the gloom increased. The black water, swollen with the wind, clung heavily to the boat—a broad-beamed, sound, good boat it had seemed in the sunshine and smooth water, but now a mere cranky old craft, fit for anything but rough weather. But that was not the risk. The stoutest would have been equally at the mercy of one of those sudden, awful blasts, which are the terror of the lake. In a moment, without

warning, down they rush, quick as lightning, invisible battering rams, and sink the bravest at a blow. Winny Hesketh glanced in the faces of the men; their countenances were not alarmed, but they were working their hearts out at the The market-folk sat square, stolid and wary. Winny was silent and observant too. Tom asked Georgie a question, was answered with brevity, and a command to keep quiet. To keep quiet was, in fact, the only courage for the occasion—none other could have availed anything—and a poor lady who had joined the boat on its return, made herself the loud and shrill exponent of the want of it. It was impossible not to pity her inward commotion, but her clamour was of the emotional sort that becomes contagious. She was of British speech too, which made her nervousness the more provok-Her voice never ceased: Was there ing. danger? she was sure there was danger. there was danger, it would be safer to land; would the boatmen land their passengers anywhere? The men wanted all their breath for their rowing, and did not respond. An old

woman drew out her chaplet, and began to tell her beads; Georgie's eyes grew restless and uneasy; Tom, but for the shame of it, would have cried. Nothing worse happened; they were quit with the fright. Winny Hesketh admonished Tom not to brag over her again of his bravery, and Tom magnanimously declared that for coolness, the silent quality of courage, she was the best-plucked one of them all. They were the warmer friends for it. Fellow-travellers, if they are to travel in peace and felicity, must not lightly permit their clubbable properties and characteristics to be revoked in doubt; and the higher respect they can preserve for one another the better will it be with them in the end of their tour—and the pleasanter all through it.

The order of the day for the next morning was letter-writing and lounging. Georgie wrote the letters: Tom and Winny visited the town—made a tour of the museum, and each to the other confessed amazement at the collection of implements called of the Stone Age. They had supposed that there were giants in those days,

but these relics suggested pigmies rather. In charge of the establishment was a young matron who deposited her baby on the floor over against the glass-cases of fearsome birds-vultures and the like-and left it there while she conducted the strangers through the building. The lawful guardian was absent, and had taken away in his pocket the key of Rousseau's library. From the museum Winny climbed up to the castle by herself-it would have been cruel to drag Tom there who wanted to be off to the water. A complacent, well-to-do little town is Neufchâtel, and has seen and made some history in its time. You may observe the arms of its counts and foreign governors painted in panel round the grand hall, and the Prussian eagle, its last alien protector, upon the door-Prussia had not been put to the door then, when our travellers were there. From the castle, Winny passed to the church hard by—it is a reformed church, and cold and drear on weekdays—and thence out on the sunny terrace, planted with ancient trees, where she rested for a sweet hour of reverie and remembrance, her

contemplative gaze on the green hills which are the lower outworks and buttresses of the great range dominated by Mont Blanc. She enjoyed many of such peaceful hours in the course of the tour, and they were not its least happy hours.

Winny returned to the inn in time for the table-d'hôte at one o'clock, where reappeared the nervous poor lady of the market-boat adventure. Her aspect was not such as 'to invite recognition, but it proceeded from her. Miss Denham, who was properly fastidious in making acquaintances, telegraphed the strictest reserve to Winny. Winny found this not so easy. The lady was next to her, and willing to talk. She mentioned yesterday's risk, and asked if her neighbour was not in a 'terrible funk.' Tom stared and grinned with delight. Winny was calmly deaf to the inquiry, on which the stranger added: 'But I know you were—and small blame to you!—for you were so awfully quiet.'

Winny smiled and said: 'Is vociferation, then, your infallible sign for courage?'

Georgie again telegraphed to her comrade to hold her peace, and became intent upon her dinner. It was, however, fated that this undesirable acquaintance should be improved.

A drive to Chaumont to see the sunset upon the mountains had been arranged for the afternoon, and cosily in a carriage with a pair of horses our friends set out. Tom elected to sit with the driver, who was exhorted not to press his cattle, but to give the travellers the opportunity of admiring whatever was worthy of admiration on the journey. It is all the way uphill; the sun was hot and the road dusty. They were not required to descend from the carriage until they came to a pretty steep turn, where the corn fields and rich pastures gave place to woods of various foliage, at which point stood poised amongst the trees a prodigious granite boulder, called the Pierre-à-bot. Tom was very tiresome to know how it came there—this specimen of a nine-pin coincided with his views of a Stone Age much more nearly than the little wee pins and knives of the museum. As they emerged from the cool covert after their inspection, they beheld twenty paces off, toiling up the hill with bag and umbrella that poor lady. Tom sprang to his place; Winny more slowly and with hesitation mounted to hers, and Georgie followed with eyes averted from the pedestrian.

'She is walking to Chaumont—there is no other place on this road to go to,' said Winny. 'It is inhuman to let her trudge in the dust and the heat, when we have room to spare.'

'If you think so, invite her to take a seat in the carriage—it is as much yours as mine,' 'Georgie coldly replied.

Winny availed herself of the ungracious permission, and as the stranger came along-side, padding wearily, she said: 'We can give you a lift if you like—we are going to Chaumont.'

'So am I—and thank you kindly.' was the eager answer.

Georgie moved round to the back-seat, opposite Winny. The stranger protested, but took her vacated corner, and so the drive was continued, with very intermittent conversation.

Georgie formally addressed her comrade as 'Miss Hesketh,' by way of warning her against further indiscretions, and then shut her eyes, and pretended to sleep. She lost nothing; for the prospect on either hand was of trees, and soon only of fir-trees, erect, dark and monotonous. The poor lady had the gift of curiosity. Speaking with bated breath, she sifted Winny more than Winny knew. Soon she was in possession of the fact that the pale little person was abroad for the recovery of her health after illness; that her fellow-travellers were brother and sister, but not her brother and sister; that her vocation was that of a governess, and a writer of stories besides—else where would be her means of thus taking her ease? She learnt further that this expedition was but for the evening; that the friends would drink tea at Chaumont, after sunset, and return to Neufchâtel by moonlight. It was the time of full moon.

'You are lucky folks. I am trying to shoggle down in the wilderness for the summer. Healthy, but slow, as you will allow when you have seen it,' was the stranger's communication respecting herself.

A spasm of pain and disgust distorted Georgie's features, and she opened her eyes full upon the familiar vagrant. She was silent. and a dull red suffusion covered her face. Poor soul, she was certainly not a companion of choice, but Winny had conceived a pity for If she had an air of swagger and a tone of bravado, they could not altogether hide the timorousness of a woman who has had her troubles, and lives in dread and doubt of how strangers may scan and reckon her up. Georgie's experience had done this already with very tolerable accuracy; Winny, without data to work from, discerned only a oncegentlewoman, fallen on evil days, who had lost heart, and let herself go to wreck as a firmerbraced character never could have done.

Fortunately the carriage was now in sight of the long, low house, which affords a cool summer lodging to tourists and refugees from the hot valley below. As it stopped at the verandah, a girl of ten years old or thereabouts came hop-

ping out on the gravel in slippers down at heel and a shabby frock that barely reached to her knees—a neglected little creature, but merry and careless as a grasshopper. She hailed the poor lady as her mamma, and was bidden to get away—a command of which she took no notice. Miss Denham alighted the first, and with severe politeness assisted the stranger to descend, took her umbrella and bag, and handed them to the child. In return she received a card inscribed with the name of 'Mrs Ross Browne, which she acknowledged with the stiffest of bows, and a change of colour, as if greatly disturbed. Mrs Ross Browne retired, and Georgie, having ordered tea, took Winny under her arm, and walked her off to that point of view beyond the house from which the most extensive prospect is to be obtained. On the road Winny received the lecture she had earned.

'I would have gone fifty miles about to avoid that woman, Winny,' Miss Denham said with suppressed irritation. 'No, I never saw her before, but I know her history—it is not a pretty history, nor is she a pretty acquaintance to pick up by the way.'

Winny expressed her compunction, and hoped they would be none the worse for it when they left her behind at Chaumont an hour or two hence.

'I am not sure that we shall be none the worse for it—she may use our names,' Georgie rejoined. 'The fact is, Winny, you do not know the world as I know it, and I must beg that you will not be so easy of address while we are travelling with only Tom. We are both independent women, and our own mistresses in a fashion, but we are not old enough to do just as we please, and we cannot be too cautious of contracting undesirable intimacies. They are always the most difficult to shake off.'

Winny promised to be more discreet in future, and wished to know something of the luckless lady whose aspect of poverty had excited her commiseration. Georgie said she might judge of her by appearances—hers was not the decent poverty of unmerited misfortune, but the

poverty of idleness, thriftlessness, and the want of self-respect.

'She is legally separated from her husband on the ground of incompatibility. He may have been as much to blame as she was, but I always pitied poor Ross-Browne. Give her the opportunity, and she will tell you her life and adventures—she is fond of doing that—and will make out a good case for herself; but you must take many grains of salt with her version. I trust she will "shoggle down in the wilderness" and not descend upon our path again. Prepare yourself to be publicly embraced and effusively thanked for favours received and favours to come whenever and wherever she meets you next. And the world is very small, Winny.'

'Don't tease, Georgie! I shall keep her at a distance. She has a crafty, faithless eye, but she looks in such misery—almost abject misery. And that little girl!' pleaded Winny.

'If you will be hail-fellow with misery put off your neat travelling costume, and put on YOL, III.

the dress of a sister of charity. Then you may take guilt and sin by the hand, and walk blameless. But while you are of the world you will be known by the company you keep-so let it be good company.' Georgie was quite right: Winny was silently mortified. 'And there is another view of it,' Georgie went on rather remorselessly: 'You told Mrs Ross-Browne that you are a governess—a woman of her coarse quality, even in her degradation, looks down upon a respectable little governess as an inferior person. Consider how you would relish her patronage. You also told her that vou write stories—ever so small a notoriety will serve her to boast of and climb by, and let me tell you, Winny, that it will not be to your literary advantage either that you should be heard of as Mrs Ross-Browne's friend.'

'That is enough, Georgie. I won't be scolded any more! How you do talk!' cried Winny in a decided pet.

Georgie smiled, and gave Winny's arm an affectionate squeeze. 'It is all for your good—you are so headlong and wilful,' said she.

'And you cannot deny that you have made mistakes in choosing whom you will love—one sad, deplorable mistake, at any rate.'

Winny's eyes flashed with tearful indignation: 'Georgie, you think I'll bear anything!' cried she, facing round on the offender. 'You are like one of those horrid doctors who enjoy vivisection!'

Georgie tittered, rather abashed—she had a habit of treating Winny as very long-suffering, and there was a strain too much of the curious inquirer in her. They walked on in silence. Winny tried to withdraw her arm, but Georgie did not let it go.

Chaumont was a complete solitude that afternoon. No one crossed their path. No one intruded on their rest at the end of the walk. Tom was disporting himself in the woods that fringed the fields before the house in quest of anything wild. The sun was still half an hour of setting, but the long shadows of evening cast a glamour over the desolate, vast tracts of marsh land which lie about the lakes in the valley. Neufchâtel spread out a

long wide silver sheet; at its head the prosperous old town climbing up-hill, and a few villages set along its shores. Bienne and Morat gleamed further off, and far, far away, beyond the low country rich in grass, and the green hills clothed with wood, rose the great mountains,—on the north the Jura, and the Alpine ranges from Titlis to Mont Blanc, peak and pinnacle, ice-white and clear against a sky of palest primrose lustre. It was a wonderful and glorious sight! A rosy flush passed upon them that changed and fainted imperceptibly to a ghastly, transparent pallor as the sun went down. Then a veil, fair and soft, was drawn over the vision of death, and a chill wintry air seemed to breathe upon the faces of the hushed and awed watchers. Georgie stood up with a shudder, wrapt Winny's shawl close about her, and carried her off, both silent, to tea at the house.

Mrs Ross-Browne did not mar their amity by a re-appearance (of which each had a secret fear), and the atmosphere having recovered its summer balminess after the dew had fallen, the drive down to Neufchâtel by the light of the moon, and through the gorge of the Seyon, was perfect—delightful.

# CHAPTER II.

#### A MEETING BY THE WAY.

This tour to Switzerland was one of the great events of Winny Hesketh's life. It was positively a very great event to her whose normal state of being was the laborious, dull monotony of schoolrooms. People who have the means and opportunity of running abroad annually, who have but to will and to do of their good pleasure, cannot, perhaps, appreciate the sense of exquisite, calm, full satisfaction of heart and mind that went with her on this journey. She was acquiring a possession that would last her her life. At the moment of a grand spectacle she seemed, perhaps, less enthusiastic than others, but the picture that had once entered at her eyes she could bring back in distinct vision years and years after. Then she was not plagued with the restless, infatuated desire

to see and do all that is written in guidebooks. A little was better to her often than much; and Georgie who had a pre-occupation which made her capricious and lazy in the matter of expeditions, was relieved of an anxiety when she found that her comrade was equally pleased to sit in a garden and gaze at the mountains, or to go a little of the way up here and there one, as other persons felt disposed. In fact, Winny was renewing her health and strength, and that by itself is a sweet sensation. To have been led within sight of the dark swelling of Jordan, and then to stray back by sunny, quiet paths to life again, is one of the highest of earthly joys, and it was hers,—hers with a pure gratitude and thankfulness.

Miss Denham asked her where she expected to find letters. Geneva, Berne, and Lucerne were the addresses she had left with her mother. At Geneva, however, by the pretty colour that came into her face, one of the two letters Georgie brought her was from some other correspondent—from Mr Durant, in fact.

It was a letter of old date forwarded from Hauxwell to Cotham.

'It is a romantic alliance, yours and Mr Durant's, Winny—I hope you are safe in your little platonic indulgence,' Georgie said with an air of doubt and cogitation. 'While it lasts you will never give a thought to anybody else.'

Winny said nothing, but fell to reading her letters, which were long, and had no drawbacks in the shape of ill news.

Mr Durant had written on a Sunday encamped in a defile of lofty hills. He described the spot, and gave her a general sketch of what had been done and suffered by himself and his fellow-adventurers since his last writing. To Winny it seemed as if the incidents that he recited were quite recent, but they had been, in fact, transacted during the previous autumn. It was an amusing and characteristic letter—such a letter as men write only to one who will value it. Mr Durant had received Winny's first reply, but none since; still he gave her credit for having kept her promise to go on writing, and indeed, she had done so. Miss Denham watched her face while she

read, passing through all its phases of expression, from bright, proud satisfaction to tender pleasure that is suffused with tears. As she looked up, at last, with a dreamy, sad, tremulous smile, she encountered Georgie's gaze. She did not shrink away from her observation now. She was relieved to have one confidante to whom she could speak of Mr Durant. Mildred Jarvis she had not dared to tell—she would have talked too much. But Georgie was both tolerant and sympathetic; she would say a few kind words, and have done.

All she said now was: 'You are a moving picture, Winny! But on what a slight foundation you are building your life.'

- 'Do you think it so slight, Georgie?' Winny asked.
- 'Yes, Winny, I do. Durant loves you—but I cannot forgive him for stealing his way into your heart on false pretences. If you did not know how he was bound, he knew.'
- 'I will not hear him blamed, Georgie. It was my own fault; he has such a kind way with him, and I made too much of it. We are

not the only people in the world who love each other, and must live apart.'

'No—but I am sorry for you, Winny. It Durant were free, you would match to perfection—and it is so much happiness perversely lost! Just before he left England I met him at Rockbro'—I did not tell you at the time, because I wanted you to get him out of your mind. He was on the sands, solitary as a pelican of the wilderness, wearing a Panama hat, for sunshade (the sun can glow very hot on Rockbro' sands), and he told me that he had been reversing the walk you had taken together—through the new town, and up to the Castle, and by St Mary's Churchyard down the steep old streets to the harbour.'

Winny's eyes shone with grateful remembrance, and yet amused remembrance, of how she had enjoyed that day: 'You might have told me, and have done me no harm, Georgie,' said she, interrupting Miss Denham in her calm statement.

'I am not sure of that,' Georgie rejoined. 'Let me finish my remonstrance. I was

going to add that Mr Durant may never be free, and that yours will not be much of a life if you make a virtue of constancy.'

'I do not expect to have much of a life, Georgie, but there will be some sweet moments in it—such as this. I know that Mr Durant has a kindness for me, but I cannot be too often reassured of it,' and Winny's eyes reverted to her letter.

'Might one be permitted to read that document?' Georgie inquired with her peculiar, modest diffidence, and rather to her surprise, Winny gave it to her without a word.

Miss Denham almost forgot the personal interest in the descriptive facts of Mr Durant's letter; but towards the end the personal interest prevailed again. She held it in her hand for a few minutes, reflecting after she came to the conclusion. Winny took it from her, and folded it up, saying, there were references in it that she did not quite make out—some letter that preceded it must have gone astray, but Mr Durant had warned her of the uncertainties of the post in those regions

'Oh yes. Still I think it is of earlier date than my Cousin Sidney's last. It is a capital letter, Winny, and sounds as if the writer were happy in writing to you,' Miss Denham remarked. 'But has Mr Durant no friends besides?'

'Yes—and I have other friends besides,' Winny answered.

It was not necessary to say more—Georgie understood her to signify that of all her friends Mr Durant was the chief, the best and the dearest. She contemplated her companion with a kindly shrewdness, not unmixed with pity. She felt an impulse to warn her of the perils and penalties of long separation—of how old familiar faces grow strange, and men are fickle—but Winny had on her peaceful countenance, and all such thoughts were very remote from her mind. It would have been cruel to disquiet her; and the letter being put out of sight, the subject of it (not one of everyday idle talk by any means) was considered to be put out of sight too.

The travellers had arrived at Geneva late the

previous night, and this morning there was no view but of the huge caravansaries on either side of the bridge across the Reuss. The town did not wear an attractive aspect. It was market-day, and busy in the market-place, but elsewhere arid, dusty, and dull.

'I had conceived of Geneva as a pious town,' observed Winny, when they had seen, and not admired, the cathedral, bare and desert within, and obscenely neglected without. Georgie replied that she was full of mistaken notions—then energetically proposed that they should leave Geneva forthwith, and go to Vevay by the steamboat.

An hour after they were afloat. The sky was clearing, the clouds were dispersing, the lovely banks of the lake were breaking through the tintless haze in vivid pictures. Boats came gliding out with their lateen sails spread, and suddenly a burst of splendid sunshine transfigured the nearer hills, the vine slopes, the white houses, set in gardens, into a scene of perfect beauty. It was summer in all its glory, and eternal winter towering beyond it, sixty

miles away, from the ice-fields of Mont Blanc.

And in the space of three hours on the water what an endless variety of prospect and association! Coppet and Nyon passed by in a glow. Lausanne, crowned by its spires, its towers, sat in the shadow of a grateful cloud, its steep and stony streets, its quaint tiled houses softened to the distant eye by groves of trees and hills of vines. Further east came into sight the peaks of the Dent du Midi, looking over the valley of the Rhone, and still in the sunshine, Vevay at the edge of the lake, backed by green steeps and slopes, and on the quay numerous strangers and pilgrims walking and watching for the arrival of the boat from Geneva.

As Winny Hesketh set her foot on the shore she heard her own name in a familiar voice: 'O Willy, here is dear Miss Hesketh! Miss Hesketh!' and turning surprised to see who called, behold, there was her first, best scholar from Hall Green, sweet, pretty Mab, whom she had not seen since she was married, arrayed in the airiest of Indian silks and a flapping leghorn

hat with tassels of straw and a white feather. She was the gracefullest, fairest figure. She put her hands on Winny's shoulders, and shone upon her with beams of goodness and beauty and happiness, and then said: 'This is Willy—my husband.' And Willy uncovered a crop of ruddy auburn curls above a plain, clever good-humoured face—the Honourable William Caradoc, to give him his due state and title.

Mrs Caradoc was as simple and affectionate as ever Mab Broome had been, and as the hotel Miss Denham had fixed on was that where the Caradocs were staying Winny had a pleasant talk with her in the garden that evening after the table-d'hôte. The young married lady informed her ex-governess that she felt the elder of the two now. Winny replied that there was a difference of only three years between them. And then she inquired after Clemmy—if she was turning out so very learned a woman. Mrs Caradoc laughed, glanced round to see that she could be safe in her communications, and then said with a mischievous fun that dear Clemmy had been 'plucked' in the

very first grand examination for which she had gone in.

'And we were so glad and relieved,' added she.
'It was quite a weight off their minds at home; for as papa said, if Clemmy had come out with flying colours, nothing would have satisfied her but to exhibit them on platforms, and we should have had her lecturing about the country on all sorts of subjects. It was a sad humiliation, but she is much nicer since.'

'Poor Clemmy!' cried Winny with a genuine sympathy. 'Perhaps she was too anxious to succeed, and grew nervous, for she is really very clever. Happily she has not her living to earn. I should like to see her examination papers. I rather think of going in for a certificate of knowledge myself if the preparation would not be too hard. It might be useful to me as a teacher.'

'Oh, you poor, dear thing, I am sure I would not if I were you—you look so delicate,' remonstrated Mrs Caradoc. 'And you know quite enough. Mamma always praises you to the skies. She calls you the most duty-doing of governesses. And so you are. If ever I have girls, you shall come and be their governess. Why did you fall ill? Were not the Peregrine-Harts kind people?'

'As kind as possible, but Rusdale has a cold winter climate, and I did not take care in time. The consequence is, that I shall have to take care always—and I want to find a situation in the south. Will you think of me, dear Mab, if you hear of anything that I am likely to suit. I shall be quite up to my work by that time.'

'I will tell mamma. Would you venture to go back to Hall Green? One of papa's sisters, Lady Mervyn, is ordered with her husband to Egypt for next winter, and mamma is to have charge of the children.'

Winny said there was nothing she should like better; and though that scheme fell through (Mrs Broome declined the care of a governess whose health must be considered), the hope and anticipation were Winny's during the remainder of her tour, and contributed a restfulness to her mind in looking forward which was a good thing gained. She asked if her pet, dear little VOL. III.

Sissy—little no longer—was still a schoolroom girl.

'Yes, she keeps Bee company, but she will leave it when the young Mervyns arrive—she is to be introduced very soon. Willy is member for Carrick in Scotland, you know—we have leave of absence since Easter on my account. His party is not in office, but we have great expectations for by-and-by. When parliament is up we stay with his family, but we are to live in London, and when we are settled in a house I shall have my sisters with me, to give them a little gaiety. Clemmy is very hand-some, and will soon marry if she does not frighten men away with her superiority.'

'It is not so much her superiority as her too candid display of it that alarms and displeases—superior women are often so oppressive. I know one who is not—Miss Denham—but her tone of mind is quite that of an agreeable man.' Winny spoke with complacent confidence in the general accuracy of her criticism, which was elicited by the sight of Georgie engaged in animated conversation with Mr

Caradoc. They were probably talking politics.

Mrs Caradoc smiled, and said with almost enthusiasm: 'Oh, Miss Denham is charming—delightful! She knows everything. Mamma has the highest opinion of her. But who could imagine her married—with her airs of perfect equality?'

'Or invested with the crowning glory of womanhood—a beautiful baby,' added Winny in a low voice, as if the idea was quite improper; and they both laughed at its evident incongruity.

Georgie would have been furious if she had heard their speculations. Never had she been more satirical on the infatuated folly of lovers, and the uxorious fondness of husbands and wives, than since her coming abroad. It was the season of honeymoons, and she was constantly seeing some demonstration of conjugal bliss to aggrieve her. Winny considered her language occasionally quite profane. She did not know that these emissions of wit and mockery were the last struggles of her pride

and her principles before condescending to the common lot. But the fact was drawing near to be revealed—and when Georgie was alone, and in good-humour, she could not forbear a chuckle in anticipation of the shock that she was preparing for her comrade—for poor, unsuspecting Winny Hesketh. Winny was shrewd, however, and numerous little circumstances were accumulating from which she might at any moment, on a sudden inspiration, divine the truth. And that moment arrived the very next day in the course of an expedition to Chillon.

## CHAPTER III.

## GEORGIE'S CONVERSION.

THE following morning Miss Denham got a letter while at breakfast, by her glowing countenance a letter that she did not expect, and she was in a prodigious fuss and excitement to be off somewhere immediately afterwards.

'Let us have a boat, and row to Chillon,' Tom proposed, and his proposition was acted upon with the shortest possible delay.

It was a sunny, sultry morning, without distant prospects, and cooler on the lake than by the road. The Caradocs were walking gently along under the lime-trees on the Quay Sina as they passed by in their boat, and Georgie muttered testily that she believed English couples were the only simpletons who would dream of sauntering arm-in-arm—making love in public. Tom lapsed into an irrepres-

sible giggle, and Winny opened her eyes in startled amazement.

'I wish somebody would make love to you, Georgie—why should not couples walk arm-inarm in public?' cried she, piqued at the reflection cast on her dear modest Mab. 'You are so vicious, one might fancy you envious!'

Georgie, amongst her other gifts, had that most feminine gift of blushing becomingly. It was made manifest now. Tom continued to giggle until symptoms of choking supervened, when his sister threatened that if he did not give that up she would—The menace was arrested on her lips by Winny's gaze of comical dismay and perplexed scrutiny. Suspicion was whispering to her that Georgie's queer, incomprehensible behaviour was the outward and visible sign of deep inward disturbance.

'I think you have both taken leave of your senses this morning!' said she with affected supercilious derision; and then she turned her back, and so adjusted her face that it was seen no more until they landed at Chillon.

If Tom had dared he would have liked

to wink an intimation to Winny, but he lay under terror of such awful penalties if he played traitor to his sister's secret that he was forced to forbear. As for Winny, her confusion was overwhelming. She also cast a veil over her face, and sunk in profound stupefaction, awaited the issue of events.

Miss Denham was not like the widow Hesketh, a denouncer of marriage as a rash adventure. She approved of it in many instances even lauded it as a beneficent institution in such cases as that of pretty Miss Otley and Miss Mildred Hutton; but the manner of her laudation had ever implied that it was an institution adapted to the weaker and softer members of the sex rather than to minds of her own high calibre. Her intimate friends had not presumed to differ from her, and Winny Hesketh had accepted years ago the general belief that Georgie was not a marrying woman. Yet Georgie had not been without earnest aspirants. Three had approached her with hope, and left her in very low spirits, to subside, at length, into her good friends; and

the gentleman who was now in pursuit of this coy Minerva, had served a two years' probation waiting on her pleasure. In her green youth Georgie had thought it possible to enjoy life to the fullest extent and in the fullest freedom without ties. She did not discover her error at once. Her masculine education. views, and sentiments, puffed her up with vain yearnings for masculine liberty, capacity, and opportunity. She patronised other girls with a frank indulgence, as if she were their better; but when she left her familiar circle, and went amongst strangers who were unaware of her breeding and her pretensions, she found herself treated as neither more nor less than a young woman of good appearance and good family, of some fortune and of unusual ability, with a few harmless crotchets as drawbacks. This estimate began by being very offensive to her, but as it prevailed everywhere, Georgie had slowly grown into agreement with it; and when she was admonished by her mother on the eve of this journey, that their sex could never really fulfil its vocation except as subsidiary to the

other, her great mind was very nearly being subdued to the necessity of making the best of its invincible limitations.

No doubt the final throes of her pride were very painful. She loved approbation; she dreaded ridicule. To be laughed at was her terror by day and by night. She had chosen Winny Hesketh for her companion through this closing act of her conversion, because she knew Winny's spirit of charity—she would probably make a little fun of her, but it would be quiet fun, and, perhaps, tinged with melancholy on her own account. And this Georgie could bear. In one particular Winny had disappointed her. She would not have her told what was coming, but she called her slow and unsympathetic because she did not begin to guess. She forgot how she had discouraged curiosity and discussion of her affairs amongst her comrades. They might guess fifty things, before they would ask her a question; and listen to fifty confidences, but never venture to seek one. Georgie kept her love and literary and other exploits all to herself, and really

enjoyed the magnifying haze of mystery without being aware of its repressing influence upon her friends. Winny Hesketh systematically eschewed personal remarks, and whatever might be supposed to savour of inquisitiveness.

This morning, however, floating down to Chillon, her abstinent principle was very severely tried. Through the cloud of bewilderment that had fallen upon her pierced inevitable rays of illumination, and she decided that Georgie had something on her mind that she was in an agony to confess if she could find out the way. Winny's tender heart suggested the kindness of making it easy to her. landed, and under the guidance of a neat little maid and her cat, made a tour of the castle of. the old Dukes of Savoy—saw their prison, their chapel, and next it the bed of stone whereon condemned criminals took their last sleep; saw their justice-hall and torturechamber with its apparatus of scorched beam and cords and pulleys; saw their Hall of Knights, and the finely proportioned, picturesque rooms, where the dukes were at home in old days, and the duchesses looked out of their recessed parlour-window over a lovely expanse of the lake, with purple mountains closing it in, and vineyards sloping to its edge.

It was in this beautiful window, which had a low stone seat on either side, that Miss Denham was led to tell her tale. The little cat had frolicked off upon a roof: the little maid must needs stay to persuade it back to her; a soldier came to the foot of the stairs, and engaged its mistress in conversation; puss ran along the ridge-tiles, then lay down in a sunny gutter, and washed her face.

'It is very pleasant here—let us sit down,' said Winny, and Georgie sat down. Tom was still inspecting the armoury. They were silent for a minute or two; Georgie looking at her comrade uneasily, and Winny returning her gaze with serene simplicity. At length, Georgie tittered in her shy inward way, and Winny spoke: 'I am prepared to give you plenary absolution,' said she.

- 'What for?' asked Georgie with an assumption of fictitious innocence.
- 'For the folly you are going to commit,' rejoined Winny. 'Does rue grow in gardens hereabouts? It is a plant that I never saw—but I suppose a sprig or two may be hidden in the myrtle of bridal bouquets?'

Georgie blushed: 'Rue or no rue, Winny, I have given in to inexorable fate—I can learn nothing I want to learn, and do nothing I want to do by myself—so I am about to take a partner. You have found me out at last—I thought you never would.'

- 'I am very sorry for myself,' said Winny meditatively. 'To quote the only piece of poetry I ever knew you write, I feel as if it were autumn already, and I "the last sear leaf hanging on the withered bough."'
- 'Never mind, Winny, you will always be happy—it is your nature. There are a thousand pleasures in life independent of men—this for instance—our tour. You enjoy it?'
- 'True, O Georgie! I am thankful for all bounties—but you appear to see that there are

larger opportunities for those who shuffle off the mortal coil of maidenhood—else why should you do it?'

'That is just where it is, Winny,' said Georgie, and entered into eager exposition. 'I shall do it with the utmost reluctance—but we cannot change the laws of nature and society. An unmarried woman has no chance of keeping on a level with the good things of this world unless she possess a great fortune in money. Then she can keep up a great house, and have troops of friends. Nothing else will serve her. Unmarried women fall into the category of uninteresting objects very soon. I don't want to be an uninteresting object.'

'Oh, indeed,' said Winny; 'you don't want to be an uninteresting object? Has that little cat come down off the roof yet?' She rose with deliberation to look out. The little cat had done washing her face, and sat on the parapet watching the little maid and the soldier. Winny interrupted their discourse, the maid shook her keys, and Georgie came forth. Then

Tom appeared. They finished their tour of the castle, and returned to the boat.

- 'You are not offended, not angry, Winny?'
  Georgie whispered, slipping her hand under her friend's arm.
- 'Offended? Angry? No—I am too astonished to be anything yet,' said Winny in her coolest voice. 'Mrs Caradoc shall have ten tries, and she will not guess it. O Georgie, what a hum you are!'
- 'You have not been discussing me with Mrs Caradoc, I hope!' cried Georgie with her air of protest.
- 'Are you going to be married abroad, and let the news blow over before you come home?' Winny asked, evading the query.
- 'Don't catechise me. I shall tell you nothing more.'
- 'Not even the name of the M.D. who is to save you from becoming an uninteresting object? It can be only an M.D.'
- 'It is Dr Harvey-Phillipps—are you any the wiser for hearing his name?'
  - 'Yes-I have even seen him. He visited

my Cousin Lucy while I was in London—Lucy is nervous and depressed: I think he prescribed change. And if you remember, Georgie, he and his sisters were with you at the Academy last summer when we met there—a rather short gentleman, rather fat also, bland, handsome, has eyes that distinctly see what they look at, full brown beard and moustache, a pleasant voice and no rough edges. But I don't like or admire him so much as Mr Durant,' said Winny with a dispassionate air of comparison.

'Ah, Winny, it is easy to see where your heart is fixed! But don't call my master "bland"—it is an odious word. His professional manner misled you. If he has a velvet glove, I can tell you he has a strong grip.'

Winny declined to retract her opinion until opportunity was given her of doing so on grounds. She was very sober and reserved over Georgie's revelation. She considered it with pensive regret. Georgie had been her friend who suited her best, and Georgie married would be lost for the best purposes of friendship—just as Mildred and Delphine were. But it

was useless repining. So the world runs away, and it is wise to renew the props we trust in.

The return to Vevay was less constrained, but yet was not cheerful. Georgie was the victim of mental commotion. Tom took the liberty to whistle a tune. He saw his sister's secret was out, and that she was unable to exercise any longer the stern suppression under which he had been made to groan. Winny was wondering in her own mind whether this Dr Harvey-Phillipps would turn up somewhere soon. She had not to wonder long. There he was under the lime-trees on the quay; just arrived by the steam-boat from Geneva.

Miss Denham saw him, and trembled. There was no affectation in it. He came forward with gay alacrity, and gave her his hand with two or three words of greeting most cordial and re-assuring. She tried to act like a common acquaintance; and turned with confused, proud agitation to Winny Hesketh, and performed the ceremony of introduction. Dr Harvey-Phillipps

shook hands as if he loved her. Two ladies advanced, ladies of mature age, composed, agreeable—Georgie's sisters-in-law that were to be, and the ceremony of introduction was continued. Tom went a-fishing to get away from all the fuss.

They walked up to the hotel, Georgie stepping delicately, lending her ears to the gentleman who had a right to her and them by the law of capture. She was quite subdued —the mildest-mannered person there. had her blush on like any pretty modest miss, and looked as complete a simpleton as any she had derided. Winny had recourse to philosophy. She foresaw that her own company, or that of the sisters-in-law, would be her fate for the remainder of the tour. She preferred Georgie's. But Dr Harvey-Phillipps preferred it too; and Winny was quick enough to discern at a glance that his claim was past contesting. It proved her wit that she abdicated gracefully, and never contemned Georgie with so much as one grave word.

There was music in the hotel-garden in the evening. Some people sat out of doors, some in their balconies, some on the quay. Winny sat in her own room, and wrote a letter to Mr Durant. She did not send it—it was a little too open-hearted read over by the morning light; and by not sending it she gained an excuse to write another. It was about eight o'clock when Georgie came to call her to tea in the private sitting-room which the Harvey-Phillipps party had commanded. Winny gazed upon her friend wistfully, and Georgie gazed at her again without speaking. were both rather solemn, and so they went together to the tea-room.

The sisters-in-law were probably older than their brother, who was a good twelve or fifteen years older than Georgie. They were an affectionate trio, and the women as proud and fond of their brother as women could be. Tom found the situation a bore, and had gone a-fishing again since dinner. Winny would have preferred to absent herself if she had known on what plea. There was a window open, and

the lively, well-accentuated strains of the band poured in. Everybody was serene, and most were cheerful, but Dr Harvey-Phillipps had a great monopoly of the finest spirits. Suddenly, as if they must have some safer valve of effervescence than mere talk and tea, he became a full band himself in mimicry of the band upon the lawn—neither sound nor fury of gesture, nothing was wanting-he was fiddle, cornet, cymbal, everything by turns—it was the richest bit of buffoonery, and to Winny Hesketh so unexpected a development, that she laughed until the tears came into her eyes, and as soon as she recovered enough to think of it, revoked that obnoxious descriptive epithet of 'bland,' against which Georgie had presented a remonstrance in her master's favour

Her master, indeed! The moment the brisk music ceased he sprang up, and, perhaps, gave her a sign to come; for she put on, with a sort of musing absence, her hat and scarf which lay on a chair ready, and they went out for a twilight stroll upon the quay, arm-in-arm. Relieved of their presence the sisters talked

them over, and Miss Hesketh was invited to join.

'Poor Georgie! I pity her. She is as reluctant as Queen Elizabeth,' said Miss Anna, the younger of the two.

'Reluctant, indeed, a plague on her reluctance!' cried the elder, Miss Martha. 'Bob has had the patience of Job—of Jacob at all events, and with much less encouragement than the patriarch. Twice seven years has he served for her. He fell in love with her when she was ten years old. At twelve he proposed for the first time, and he has proposed annually ever since, swearing at each rebuff that he would never marry any other woman. Don't you agree that he is entitled to her, Miss Hesketh?'

'All you tell me is news. Georgie never permitted me to hear of Dr Harvey-Phillipps until to-day,' said Winny.

'You have no more to complain of than other people. We never dared say a word or look a look when she was there. We dare not now. She sickens of ideas that are jaded

with much talk. She is a dear, excellent creature, but full of megrims. She treated Bob as a good joke until two years ago, when she was prevailed on to promise that if ever she ventured into the bonds of holy wedlock it should be with him—he even made her fix a date to give a decision. He is rare and triumphant; for to the last she kept him in uncertainty. They will be very happy.'

Winny breathed a sigh, and said: 'I think Georgie would have done very well without your brother. I believe she is marrying to be in the profession. It has a fascination for her. She once dissected a sparrow.'

The sisters laughed at this little ebullition, and bade Miss Hesketh tell that to Bob. She withdrew in quest of Mrs Caradoc instead—to give her the ten tries to guess at Miss Denham's fate and fortune. But Mrs Caradoc guessed at one try. She had seen Miss Denham pass with Dr Harvey-Phillipps in front of her windows. 'And I don't know why we should have assumed that she was never to marry. It was very impertinent,' said she.

Winny felt extremely tired—very weary, indeed. She retired to her solitary room to reflect on Georgie's conversion—all learnt since the morning. Georgie did not seek her that night before going to her own room. She had such good company that, for once, she forgot Winny.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PLEASURES AND PAINS OF TRAVEL.

But Georgie remembered her friend in the morning, and came knocking at her door before she was ready to emerge. Winny let her in, and received kisses and excuses. Georgie was herself again. 'I had no notion that our tour would be spoilt and cut up like this,' said she with an air of being injured. 'I intended that we should spend six weeks together, making Lucerne our furthest point, and arriving in Paris again about the first week in August. And now these people have joined us.'

'Oh, never mind for me, Georgie,' Winny said, to set her at her ease. 'Nobody will be in my way, and I will be in nobody's way—more than I can help. See, I have got out my work—pens, ink and paper—so you need not fear that I shall be dull.'

'That is a good child! Make notes. Descriptive bits are always more graphic for being done on the spot. They all like you, Winny.'

'I'm glad to hear it. Tell me, Georgie—are you going to be married abroad?'

'Yes—in Paris. I made papa promise that he would run over with my sister Bell.' Winny absorbed this news into her mind, and though she said little, she thought a great deal. Georgie perceived it, and continued: 'What can I offer you for consolation, Winny? We shall live in town—I'll take you to see Mario in "Faust" if you will come to us! That would give me fortitude to support the removal by marriage or otherwise of every friend I possess.'

'Cotham will not be the same place without you. Shall we go on to Lucerne now, Georgie?' Winny inquired.

'Certainly we shall. I have changed nothing of my plans. We shall travel in two parties. If we happen to stay at the same hotels it will not matter much. You will find Anna and Martha sensible and sociable. I expect Tom

will be getting himself into scrapes without me to look sharply after him—I almost think I shall send him home—straight through.'

- 'O Georgie, then let me go with him!' cried Winny eagerly.
- 'And leave me alone? If you mention such a thing again, Winny, I shall consider you very unkind.'

Winny did not wish to be unkind, she wished only not to be embarrassing. On second thoughts, however, she appreciated Georgie's reasons for desiring to retain her; and Tom, refusing to be sent home, there was no break in the arrangements with which they had set out on their tour.

Their next halting-place was at Freyburg, where they took up their quarters in a comfortable house with a terrace and a grand gazebo overlooking the ravine through which the river runs. Other company frequented the terrace, and our two parties in one soon split up into three, and went their several ways. The elder ladies were old travellers, and did not care to weary themselves with explorations. They

had zigzagged up and down the valley twenty years ago, and were contented to bring out their knitting to the view, and to converse with some nice-looking strangers who had a similar disposition. Nor did Georgie love fatiguebut Dr Harvey-Phillipps took care of her. Winny Hesketh had Tom and her guide-book -and even they divided: Tom to inspect the suspension-bridge, and Winny to see the cathedral and hear the organ—but it was out of order. Thence she went to see the lime-tree which tradition says was planted on the day the battle of Morat was won-not in an immaculately patriotic cause, but over immense odds on the side of the enemy, and the Swiss are very proud of it. There were some old folks resting on the bench that encircles its bole, any of whom would have told Winny the story of its planting if they had possessed a common speech. But she had it in her guide-book, so the loss was the less. On the 22d of June 1476, it was planted, and spreads yet a sweet summer shadow, though its vast trunk is hollowed by decay, and its boughs lean on stout stone

props. A young soldier, wounded in the battle, ran all the way from Morat to Freyburg with the tidings of victory. He came into the town waving a lime-branch, and here, opposite the ancient *Rathhaus*, where the gossips still gather after the toil of the day to hear and tell the news, he fell dead—so they say: and they planted the lime-branch on the spot, which grew into this famous tree, and puts forth green leaf and fragrant blossom to the present time.

From Freyburg everybody went to Berne, and here Georgie and Winny had one large room in common, a charming sitting-room with a magnificent bow-windowed prospect of the Bernese Alps, and two white-curtained recesses to sleep in after the prettiest Continental fashion. Georgie had no more prodigious long letters to write—the favoured recipient was lodged across the corridor—and it was agreeable to lavish her occasionally tedious leisure on dear Winny: Winny, she said, looked such a meek, patient sufferer amongst all these unexpected strangers. Georgie

had a theory that Winny was shy and timid.

'Indeed, but I don't suffer,' Winny protested with considerable spirit. 'They are perfectly polite. If compassion for me withdraws you from their engaging society, I am sorry. I can always amuse myself.' Winny knew it did not.

'But I cannot amuse myself, and I must escape to you sometimes. Be good and gracious to me, Winny—it will not be for long.'

'If you begin to be pathetic, Georgie, I shall cry—and I'd rather not. What time does the sun rise? We have a lovely opportunity here of seeing it rise on the mountains, and I have heard that it is even more wonderful and beautiful at its rising than its setting. But I never wake before six o'clock.'

'I'll wake you—it must rise about four. I am glad we are having this tour together, Winny—it is putting quite a colour into your pale face again. It will give you a fresh start.' Here Georgie was silent, and Winny looked sad. There was nothing very jubilant in the

fresh start she was to make. After a pause Georgie tried another subject. 'I think, on the whole, a long courtship is an advantage, Winny, don't you?' Winny considered, but did not find herself in a position to give an opinion. Georgie proceeded to explain why. 'We have tried one another's constancy, and our mutual kindness has had time to strike deep root. Six years, at least, has he courted me—twice six, he says—but my memory does not go so far back as that, unless apples and oranges signify wooing. We have grown into habits of friendship and affection: how say you, Winny—shall we be happy married?'

'Yes—the profession thrown in, I think you will be very happy; and you can have music whenever you please.' Nothing sweeter or more sentimental than this would Winny commit herself to, but Georgie appeared not dissatisfied.

They stayed a week at Berne, and found the time run fast away. There was some history good to be learnt where it had been made, and Winny Hesketh ranged about the quiet town often by herself. The older parts, quaint and picturesque, pleased her greatly; so did the green country round, and the rushing river bordered by giant poplars. But her favourite resort was under the trees on the Minster Platz, where she sat many a peaceful hour gazing at the mountains, and nothing else; unless sometimes of an evening a comfortable housewife knitting on the bench beside her would enter into conversation.

The engaged lovers, if we may take the liberty to call them so, made daily expeditions on horseback, and Tom was of their party often—the surest way to keep him out of mischief. Whenever he was missing he was conjectured to be gone to the bears. The sisters-in-law lived much as they were used to live at home. For many years they had been in the practice of passing part of the summer on the continent, and their energy for sight-seeing was well-nigh exhausted. They had no more curiosity. In the morning they rose: they breakfasted: they wrote letters, worked, read and talked a great deal of nothing. They lunched: they liked to

take a drive: money was abundant with them. One evening everybody, instead of dining at the table-d'hôte, drove to the Enge, a lofty, wooded peninsula overhanging the river, to eat pancakes and see the sunset. The pancakes were very nice and the sunset was very fine; but, perhaps, the majority would have better enjoyed their accustomed fare at that time of day—Miss Anna had an attack afterwards which affected her nerves.

The sisters were very worthy women and sociable with others of their kind. patronised Miss Hesketh rather too muchthey were older, and it was their way of being good to her, a poor young governess lately risen from the bed of sickness. She felt in their company as she used to feel in that of Mrs Broome, who made such a point of preserving distinctions of rank. These ladies told her how very, very kind, they and their brother thought it of Miss Denham to bring her abroad under the critical circumstances of her health. and in a general way were so oppressive that she much preferred her solitude to their society. Winny also thought it kind of Georgie, but now, being so much alone, she reflected that the convenience was mutual. She was not exacting, and her welcome was ever ready for her friend when they came together after hours of absence. Georgie often said a half apologetic word, but Winny would not hear it, and insisted that she was as contented as possible, and was getting into harness for work again—in proof of which she showed several scribbled sheets of foolscap paper.

Georgie was pleased to see them. 'For travelling runs away with a great deal of money,' said she. 'I hope you will not think you have paid too dear for your whistle when we make up our accounts in Paris.'

'Don't disquiet yourself for that, Georgie; I am easy,' was Winny's cool rejoinder.

She could afford to be easy. She was deriving benefit and profit every day from what she did and what she saw. On their last morning at Berne she witnessed in all its splendour that sunrise upon the Alps which she had desired to see. Georgie woke her out of a deep sleep to

behold the glory of God upon the mountains. The sky was one expanse of delicate cloudless blue, melting to as delicate a saffron in the east. Forty miles away, beyond the green hills and pastures, their walls and buttresses, towered the ice-peaks and pinnacles, and the vast snow-fields glittered white, with shadows of pure, pale grey-Wetterhorn and Shreckhorn, Eiger and Monch, Jungfrau and Breithorn, Blumen Alp and Stockhorn. With gradual, slow unveiling the sun rose above them, and touched the tops of the tall poplars with morning gold, while the river, the valley, the roofs of the town, lay soft in the dusk of night. Moment by moment spread the dawn of a most hushed and lovely day, and the noises of life waking up began to rise out of the drowsy silences.

From Berne to Thun, through the richly cultivated valley of the Aar, with the frigid Alps clear in sight all the way, was the next stage of their tour. Then by the lake of Thun to Interlachen, which the Jungfrau, pure as new-fallen snow, brilliantly overlooked that VOL. III.

day, and forward by gardens of roses, by orchards and farmsteads and houses of the old town to the mountain road which goes up to Grindel-Grindelwald was almost too rural for wald. the elder ladies, with its châlets and cattle by thousands feeding in the green pastures, but the rest of the party went to the glaciers under Wetterhorn, and over to Lauterbrunnen to see the Staubbach Fall—diaphanous that afternoon as a gauzy robe, blown aside by the wind, shone through by the sun. For the Sunday and a little society the whole company went to the hotel of the Giessbach, where it unkindly drizzled, and washed out the view: so that on the morrow, they were not sorry to cross the lake and the Brunig Pass to Lungren, and after a mid-day halt, to drive away to Lucerne, where life is abundant, and the panorama of strange faces unfolds a perpetual variety and resource.

They took up their quarters in one of the new caravanseries that front the lake, and Winny Hesketh had a delightful little room at a corner of the house from which the lake, and cloudy Pilatus, and a picturesque glimpse of the town towards the bridge, were visible. Georgie had a room next to hers; and just below, opening on the balcony, was the sittingroom where Georgie's friends were—where Georgie had the privilege of going whenever she would—which, in obedience to an authority she loved, was not seldom.

Winny Hesketh was credited now with the possession of much tact. When she was asked to tea, she went with amiable politeness; but she was understood to be, for the most part, busy in her own room—'Studying,' the sisters-in-law said. And she cheerfully announced to Georgie that she did not care how long they stayed at Lucerne; for she perceived that it was a place where she could roam about by herself, and find out whatever there was to see without encumbering anybody. And she began her roaming the next day.

The pleasures of foreign travel are somewhat coy. Seek them diligently, and they evade you often; take the way easy, and they drop on you

out of the skies, descend to meet you on the mountains, take you by the hand in lonely fields, and give you unexpected greetings in the market-place. The united parties made excursions in company to Fluellen, at the head of the lake, when the gloomy grandeur of the bay of Uri was softened by universal sunny haze; and to the top of the Rigi when envious mists obscured the sunset, and were hardly dispersed by the dawn. And they went to Tell's Chapel—Winny full of the romance of history. And there what a downfall for her enthusiasm!

'Never talk to me of Swiss piety and patriotism again!' cried she in vehement disgust. And forthwith she doubted of Tell, whether he was not a mere legendary hero whose exploits his nation so meanly commemorates in hideous modernised frescoes, where, to the brow of the very Christ upon the Cross, the vulgar of all peoples and races and tongues have been permitted to scribble their names. Many times had Winny longed for a pail of whitewash and a big brush—especially in

Catholic cantons—to wash out the ugly pictures in so-called sacred places, and never more than here. After that cruel shock to tender sentiment she preferred the outside of the Swiss churches to the inside, and was only prevailed on to go and hear the fine organ at the mother-church of Lucerne by Georgie's assurance that she could retire into a higher pew, open her ears and shut her eyes, and see nothing horrific—but she loved the music better sitting in the cloisters of the populous church-yard above the garden slopes of the houses that go down to the lake.

And when she took her walks alone she found sweet satisfactions. One evening she crossed the mill-bridge without too long inspection of the Dance of Death figured on the arches that sustain its roof, and following the course of the blue turbulent Reuss, where it slackens its impetuous rush through the level plain, came to quiet country scenes; to meadows newly mown along the river-side, to peaceful, prosperous farm-houses, to herds of cows feeding and little children at play. These glimpses of home-

life, away from the babel stream of wanderers in search of the picturesque, pleased her mightily—more, perhaps, than the grand spectacles which must be seen at the cost of so great toil, even if they do not capriciously hide themselves in the hour when expectation looks to be fulfilled.

Winny took that walk by the river often enough to become familiar with it; and another walk she took which led through the churchyard, and up green fields to a pretty height where grew three linden trees—the end of a favourite summer evening stroll of the townspeople, for the sake of the view. It was always frequented more or less, and one evening when Winny came there a lady and child were resting on one of the benches under the lindens. was not an agreeable surprise to discover that they were Mrs Ross-Browne, and her poor little unkempt daughter. Winny recognised them at a glance; they also recognised her, and with the eager friendliness of strangers in a strange land rushed to meet her, and claim acquaintance. Winny coloured, and recollecting Georgie's words of wisdom and warning, felt sadly dismayed, but it was not in her to answer their greeting otherwise than kindly, with compassion for them in her heart.

'And so you could not stay at Chaumont?' said she.

'It was impossible,' replied the poor lady. 'There was not a soul to speak to but a school of American girls in charge of a married doctor, travelling in Europe to finish their education, and a Scotch episcopal parson whose wife had no more discernment than to offer me tracts. and invite me to prayers. When I found they were come to do chaplain's duty for a couple of months I prepared to quit—nothing I hate like the pious cant of my dear countrymen, except the cant of their wives! I heard of a pension here almost as cheap as Chaumont, and very cheap when the season is past, and we came off. There is the house half-way down the hill: we have not much to eat, but there is more choice of company. How are you and your friend getting on? You don't look strong yet-won't you sit down?'

Winny had walked there to sit down, and watch the sunset. She accepted the invitation, not knowing how to decline it; but feeling not at all comfortable in the society of Mrs Ross-Browne, who did not or would not notice her reserved air. That Winny was only a governess gave her courage to push her acquaintance. She had something to say also, and no scruple in saying it. 'Your friend did not tell me her name, but I found it out where you stayed at Neufchâtel. Oh, I know Miss Denham by reputation very well indeed! And she must know about me, though she did not choose to 'acknowledge it-probably for reasons to which I am quite indifferent. And, perhaps, she tried to prejudice you against me?'

Winny was dumb. She had no skill of fence, no practice or natural dexterity in eluding such conversational snares as this. Her sole feint for defence was holding her tongue—but then her face gave consent by its confusion to what her interlocutor shrewdly suggested. 'Ah, I see she did!' was the inevitable conclusion. 'And I took a fancy to you in the boat that

awful day. But I don't suppose you ever care for anybody unless to put them in a book?'

- 'My friends are scarcely so useful to me in that way as I could desire,' said Winny, her lips relaxing into a smile.
- 'What do you mean?' asked Mrs Ross-Browne sharply.
- 'What I say. My friends are simple, respectable folks of ordinary lives and manners. I don't think there is a history amongst them.'

Mrs Ross-Browne was silent for a minute. Then she inquired in a sullen, injured tone: 'Did Miss Denham recite to you my history?'

Winny made a virtue of the necessity that her tell-tale face imposed upon her, and curtly replied: 'The barest outline of it.'

'She might have told it to you in full—it is neither very long, nor very new, nor very bad.'

Winny gave no hint that she wished to hear it—she did not wish to hear it. She spoke of the beauty of the mountain effects—rosy in the light, purple in the shade, and the sky fading to wan sulphur-green. But Mrs Ross-Browne had no eyes for this beauty: rage and misery had blinded her to peaceful joys long and long ago. Winny hesitated to leave her, and while she hesitated the opportunity was lost. The poor soul seized it to open the noisome catalogue of her disasters. Winny heard it with burning ears, and a profound commiseration. At the end she said: 'It is a wretched story. But with your little girl left to you, I think you may retrieve your life in a measure—and, for her sake, you ought to try.'

'I wish you would let me write to you! No one has said anything so kind to me for years,' exclaimed Mrs Ross-Browne.

'If I can do you any good or help you I will,' Winny said, and consented. It was not a very prudent step, but as she reasoned with herself—If we never pity any but those who suffer for no fault of their own, and never succour any but the blamelessly oppressed, our charity would not suffice to keep ourselves warm.

When she rose to descend the hill Mrs Ross-Browne would walk with her, and the little girl gambolled on before. The spirits of the poor lady were the lighter for the sympathy she had evoked, and she reverted to her easy, familiar modes of speech. It was not pleasant, but it was a fresh warning to Winny, to be thus admonished as they went down the road: 'Now don't go and make a romance out of me.'

'I see no romance in what you have told me,' Winny replied with an unvarnished plainness. 'It might afford me, here and there, a cue of legal information to work from, but the story itself is quite out of my line. I could not handle it at all.'

It was a relief to Winny when Mrs Ross-Browne said good-night to her in the church cloisters, and calling up her child, turned back to her own lodgings. Winny told Miss Denham what had occurred, and Georgie expressed a hope that she would not call upon them at the hotel. She did, however, the very next morning, and so early that there was no pretence of being out. She asked for Miss Hesketh, and only Miss Hesketh saw her. Miss

Denham declined her acquaintance, and gave Winny some much needed advice upon the occasion.

'Listen to me, Winny, and mark what I say, or it will be the worse for you. Let your acquaintance stop short of intimacy. give her an introduction to anybody—you are not socially big enough or strong enough to help her out of the mire. And I have another caution to add, which, perhaps, you will not like-you cannot afford to lend her money. Compassion for ladies like Mrs Ross-Browne is sometimes a dear indulgence. And remember the adage—''tis an ill bird that fouls its own nest:' you have heard her abuse of her own . family and former friends, and so you know that where she hates her words are cudgels. Oh, I am aware of her character—and I wish you may not have experience of it.'

Winny was not permitted to remain long in doubt of whether Georgie had reason on her side or not. The vagrant lady proceeded to make good her footing, and pestered her daily with visits, notes and communications by her little girl. Then gifts of no use were pressed upon her, which she had to decline as encumbrances on a tour; and very soon she was reproached as too worldly-prudent, and in bondage to hypocritical, conventional proprieties. Winny was disconcerted by these fluent, impertinent attacks, and Georgie hoped they would come to a breach. But Mrs Ross-Browne had no intention of forfeiting the step back into the world that she had won, and adhered to Miss Hesketh like a burr, in spite of discouragement, in defiance of Miss Denham's freezing airs, and the averted fastidious eyes and noses of the sisters-in-law.

When the time came to leave Lucerne, Winny felt almost consoled because she was escaping from an entanglement that everybody pronounced dangerous. She acknowledged that she had been too wilful and wise in her own conceit of doing good; and that a middle-aged woman, sent adrift from husband and family, and with nothing more to lose, must be an undesirable acquaintance for a girl whose reputation must sustain her fortune and position in

life. Compassion was not what Mrs Ross-Browne wanted, and apart from compassion Winny had not one taste or sentiment in common with her. She asked for Miss Hesketh's address at Cotham, and offered to visit her if she were at home when next she went to England. Winny could not be very fervent in her thanks—in her secret heart she wished that she might never see the vagrant lady again.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE LIFE OF EVERYDAY.

WINNY HESKETH stayed only one day in Paris on her way home from Switzerland. Georgie and she made up their accounts, and she found her money nearly out. So she took her passport, and prepared to return to England alone. Mr Denham had met his daughter in Paris, but the wedding was not to be for three weeks yet. Georgie asked Winny if she had any fear of going all the way to Cotham by herself if she had, Tom should take her to Calais. Winny protested that she had none, but she did not sleep very well the night before she started, for thinking of the possible adventures and difficulties that she might have during the next twenty-four hours. She meant to go straight through without rest or break. Haylands were in the country.

'You don't feel that I behaved unkindly in not telling you what was to be the conclusion of our tour?' Georgie rather anxiously said to her when they were about parting.

'I am very glad you did not,' was Winny's most sincere reply. 'Perhaps if I had been warned I should not have come. And now I have had all the pleasure. As for the end, I am resigned, if you are.' Georgie was more than resigned.

Winny was not in the blithest spirits on her railway journey to Calais. She had left another stay of her youth behind her. It was evening, and then it was night—the first solitary night-travel she had experienced yet, and there was a sense of desolation in it. But she was not given to whining; she encouraged herself with maxims, and kept cool, as if she were used to it. It was a fine starlight night at Calais, and the Channel was smooth as glass. The short crossing proved a restorative, and it was dawn at Dover. The gardens of Kent in the sunny, dewy morning were beautiful, and not until she had passed through London from

the station at which she had arrived to that from which she was to start northwards did she begin to feel the strain of long fatigue.

It was nearly four o'clock, and a sultry, deserted afternoon, when she arrived at Cotham. There was nobody in the streets. A man took her traps on a barrow, and she walked home. A sense of peaceful content pervaded her mind as she approached Castle Green. She had by nature that feeling very strong in her, that home is home, be it ever so homely. She was expected, though she had not been able to state the precise hour when she would reach Cotham. Her mother saw her from the parlour window, and both she and Susan were at the door when she came up.

- 'Oh, I am glad to be at home again!' cried she as she went in.
- 'You are tired, Winny,' said her mother, and kissed her, her own eyes shining mistily.
- 'Yes, for the moment I am. But I shall be all right after a good night's sleep. I am much the better for my tour.'

VOL. III. F

- 'You ought to be, Winny it must have cost a large sum.'
- 'Never mind, mother, it will pay for itself in fairy-money out of my own head very soon.'

Nanny Anson had appeared in the background. 'Don't let's think of the money now, my joy, but get your things off, and your tea given you,' interposed the old nurse. 'You are better, I dessay, but I can't see as you're much fatter.'

Winny was neither fat nor rosy now, but she was not too tired after tea to tell her pleasing experiences in foreign parts, or to hear her mother's account of her most recent trouble-some charges (two grammar-school boys in the measles) with another piece of news besides. During her daughter's absence the widow Hesketh had been to Hull to visit her sister Rutherford who was ill at this time of her last sickness.

'They were all very polite, but I don't think I shall ever go from home again, Winny,' her mother told her. Winny had brightened at the first mention of this journey, but now she listened

without speaking. 'Mr Rutherford has been often in Cotham, without ever calling, which was not proper respect. They have a beautiful house, and everything that heart can desire. My sister Bessy and me were more of companions than the others until she married, but our misfortunes raised a barrier. I had not seen her since your father died, and she is more aged than I am, though she is younger. She has partly lost her memory.'

Winny changed her attitude of attention for one of repose, and her mother continued: 'They showed me every civility while I stayed, but none of them said they would be pleased to see you or Dick. I was disappointed. They had heard of you through some friends of theirs,—the Jarvises,—that you are a governess, and write.'

Winny coloured, and said: 'They will have heard nothing to my disadvantage—unless, indeed, they are like the majority of the world, and think scorn of a young woman who earns her own living.'

'They did not talk so. Mr Rutherford

approved of the way I had brought you up.'

'No one talks so, mother. They do so, that is all. Never mind, we want nothing from them!'

'We want nothing from them. But I should have been pleased if my sister Bessy or your cousins had felt an interest to hear about you—you are company for them or for any of their friends who came to the house while I was there.'

Winny laughed. 'Perhaps not, mother; rich and poor are far apart.'

'I do not call people poor, Winny, who have all they need. What do you wish for that you have not?'

'Nothing, mother, nothing. I do not even wish for the interest of my Rutherford relations.'

The widow Hesketh looked chagrined. The Rutherford relations were on her side of the family, and she would have liked her children to find friends amongst them. From further details that she gave of her visit Winny

learnt that a luxury of living, not without refinement, prevailed amongst the commercial magnates to whom Mr Rutherford belonged, of which she had no experience, and which was quite unknown in such vegetative old families as the Peregrine-Harts. She could not console herself for their indifference with a reflection that they were inferior people. If the parents had not much culture, they were in the fashion of their age and generation, and the younger members of the house had all that schooling could graft on good abilities, and they were handsome every one. Mrs Hesketh said her sister Bessy had been the prettiest of all her sisters, and that Mr Rutherford was tall and still of an erect, fine presence, though getting well on in years. She had heard no particulars of her sister Jane, Mrs Falkland at Leeds, because though the Rutherfords and Falklands were rivals in opulence, they were not on terms; but of her sister Elizabeth, the wife of Mr Clarkson at Bristol, she had received every information that could gratify her in the absence of personal intercourse. The Clarksons also were in great prosperity. Winny encouraged her mother to talk of her visit. It had been an effort, and she was not likely to repeat it; she was mortified that her children were not more thought of, but having confessed that, and seen Winny take it carelessly, her mind was relieved.

In her young days Winny Hesketh had imbibed from the reading to which she was prone a good deal of worldly philosophy, which, no doubt, influenced her turn of thought, before experience bore it out. 'O mother,' said she, 'Dick and I are neither considerable enough nor agreeable enough to be of use to our grand relations, who are only like the generality of people if they do everything for their own sakes. I don't mean to invite annoyances by looking for anything beyond what I can fairly win by my own exertions. I expect to pay the whole shot for what I get, whether by work or by merit.'

'Pay the shot, Winny?' remonstrated the widow, diverted from the just thought by the phrase in which it was clothed.

- 'Yes, mother. The phrase is as old as the Spanish Armada, and is admirably expressive.'
- 'I do not see that; if I did not hear your voice, I should suppose that it was a man speaking, both from what you say, and the way in which you say it.'

This was a severe rebuke. The widow Hesketh desired her daughter to be a self-reliant woman, but that she should put on masculine airs or utter manly sentiments was quite out of her reckoning. Poor Winny sighed, smiled, and said nothing. She often caught herself thinking in not at all a sweetly feminine way.

Winny Hesketh was now at home again, re-established in health, and ready to resume her teaching. Her old friends congratulated her on having made a more complete recovery than they had ventured to expect. She was herself again, and began to look round upon the world she lived in, as a world to be made the best of. Mrs Broome called to answer the letter that Winny had written to her after her

meeting with Mrs Caradoc. Her mind was not made up until she saw Miss Hesketh, but she had said to herself at once, that it would be too great a hazard—the young person would never be able to do as much with the same cheerful ease as formerly. Winny was disappointed, but she accepted the decision with calmness. She had got over her shy prejudice against going into strange houses, and her social fears and timidity were much abated. Miss Denham had told her that she would see more of the world, and in a greater variety of ranks as a governess changing her situation often than she could possibly do living with her mother in Cotham, and such knowledge would be of service to her in her vocation as a writer of sketches. Winny was satisfied to treat the alternative not as what she wished, but as compensation for what she might have to put up with; and under advice of Mrs Brunton she wrote to an agent in London, stating her capabilities and previous engagements, and asking to be put in the way of finding a home in the South.

A long chapter might be written upon agents. But Winny Hesketh's dealings with them were quickly despatched. address sent to her was from a clergyman's wife in Sussex, very inquisitorial as to her religious profession and practice. Winny reflected that this might be right in the inquirer. but she did not like it for herself-and some of the questions she did not, in fact, know how to answer, and as the salary was insufficient, she closed the correspondence on that plea. The next application was from a clergyman's wife in Cornwall; and the agent begged Miss Hesketh to mention the social position of the families in which she had already lived. Winny did mention it, and the end of that matter was a letter from the lady to say that she feared Miss Hesketh would not suit a retired country parsonage. Winny was sorry; it was a nice letter—but the negotiation was dropt.

Meanwhile, she went every day across the Green to St Stephen Martyr's Rectory, and taught the rector's children from half past nine to twelve, then took a walk with them, dined with them, gave lessons again till four o'clock, and went home. This was an engagement to her liking, and she was by no means anxious to change it for a permanent one. But now, as when before, she had tried the life of a visiting governess, her mother would watch her leave the house on a rainy day with a most grievous countenance.

Perhaps this seems a dull story to tell, but it was not a dull life to lead. The quality of dulness is rather within us than without. Winny Hesketh supported her everyday life with a patience that argued contentment. She had nothing to expect better than what she had got—a little more reputation, perhaps, from the books she might write, but for that she had a cheerful indifference. When convinced that no one who loved her cared for her literary reputation, neither did she care for it; the main thing was to avoid contempt.

As the evenings drew in with fire and candlelight it was like early days come back again her mother in her corner, and she at the round table in that seat nearest the hearth that used to be Dick's when they were children, learning their lessons. Her mother still preferred to see her plying her needle rather than poring over a book, though Winny's obedience to the adage that a stitch in time saves nine, left her with few arrears for her needle to make up. One night the widow Hesketh made some observation equivalent to a regret that she had not been trained to that business which she had herself successfully followed before she was married—they could have carried it on together in the house where they were, without being obliged to separate, and without anxiety for the future, she said.

Winny looked rather distressed; but she knew the fixity of her mother's ideas. 'It is too late to be sorry now,' said she. 'I am earning an income sufficient for my wants; and if I were as poor as a church mouse, I should not wish to change my way of earning it. But if you had brought me up as a milliner, I daresay I should have done well. I have many ideas that it is impossible to produce for my

own adornment. I should like to dress some of the old ladies who come to St Stephen's in accordance with their age, and I should like to dress some of the young ladies too. They are so afraid of simplicity.'

'How you do run on, Winny,' said her mother. 'But I am not surprised. There is room for improvement amongst the Cotham milliners—they are too showy. Mrs Trym herself wears a bonnet with feathers that makes her look like a figure of an Indian chief.'

'Tell me something of when you were a milliner, mother,' said Winny, eager in the pursuit of useful real knowledge. 'You must have been rather a dear one to go to, if I may judge from the relics of your own old silks and laces.'

'I never professed to serve cheap customers, Winny—there were other shops in the town for common goods. But the ladies who came to me once never left me for anybody else. I had an excellent business. I have no doubt that if you had been as fond of your needle

as you are of your pen, you might by this time have taken as good a position in Cotham as I held at Hulton. I was only twenty when I succeeded Miss Sugden. I had served my apprenticeship with her, and very strict she was, but she did her duty by us. All the young people stayed on with me when she gave up the business to be married. She married a beneficed clergyman, the Reverend Thomas Murgatroyd, at Winston, just out of Hulton.'

'Ever so mean a curate of now-a-days who might marry a prosperous milliner, would be treated as having lowered his cloth,' Winny injudiciously remarked. 'Unless,' she added on second thoughts, 'he were a literate or a St Bees' man.'

'Indeed? At the time I am speaking of it was no unusual thing for some of the sons and daughters of clergymen with large families to be apprenticed to respectable trades. Now they go into service as tutors and governesses. I am rather of Miss Maria Baxter's opinion that a good home and business, with indepen-

dence, are preferable to that form of gentility. There were very few openings for governesses until late years. You are a governess, Winny; your Aunt Agnes wished it, you wished it yourself, in preference to being a milliner, but you are not so well off as your mother was at your age. You will be a long while in earning and laying by a thousand pounds—unless you learn to be more sparing in your expenses.'

Winny laughed: 'That sounds an immense sum, mother—a thousand pounds!' said she. 'But the way of earning it goes for something—and don't you know that I spend and spare by rule? I save in the bank a third of all I make, which I have been told is the just proportion. If I had been apprenticed to tying bows, probably I should esteem the tying of bows the most important vocation in the world, far more dignified than teaching children and telling stories—but as it is, I don't.'

'There was a Miss Burney who wrote some lively novels that I remember at Stoke Newington—she was thought most fortunate when old Queen Charlotte took her to tie bows.

You are not quite so tall as Miss Burney, are you, Winny?'

Winny meekly acknowledged the difference, but added: 'She would not be thought to have achieved honour now. Burns was promoted to be an exciseman, and Evelina to be a court drudge. She wearied of it mightily. But, mother, you are not wishing that I should turn milliner now?' she inquired on a sudden inspiration of the truth.

'With your peculiar notions, Winny, whatever I might wish, it would be impossible,' said the widow stiffly. 'You appear to despise a business that your mother was much respected in.'

'Dear mother, I despise nothing and nobody,' Winny said, and was silent for a space.

'You have no call to do so. Did not Mr Southey who was poet-laureate, and his friend Mr Coleridge who was also a famous author, marry two sisters who were milliners in Bath? I am sure that I have heard your father mention them.'

'Perhaps, mother-I don't know whom they

married. But you must not fancy that I feel a contempt for any rank or condition of men, or women either, merely because I prefer one sort of work for a living rather than another.' Winny said this with gravity, and then reverted to the practical part of her mother's early occupation, and manifested the genuineness of her interest in it by inquiring whether it was her custom to go to London or to Paris for the new fashions. The widow was readily communicative.

'I never went further than Bond Street, Winny. Madame Robarts (she called herself "Madame" though she was as much an Englishwoman as myself) went over to Paris in the spring and autumn, and came back with full-dressed models, and all the latest shapes in hats and spencers and mantillas. She was a clever woman, and made a sufficient fortune in a very few years.'

'And before you were your own mistress, mother — when you were Miss Sugden's apprentice—how did you live?'

'I learned my trade to begin with, and then

staved on as an improver, and afterwards as principal assistant. We fared very hardly at table. Bread was at a great price, and we had only four little pieces—one slice of the loaf-at breakfast and tea, and a scrape of butter: I never wished to waste a crumb, but we had none of us enough to eat. It was not wise economy—we used to say Miss Sugden would skin a flint, she was so near. You have not known what it is to be hungry and stinted in your food, Winny, and be thankful you have not. When Miss Sugden was going to be married, she proposed to my father to make over the good-will of the business to me, in consideration of my carrying it on, and paying her a fourth share of the profits for five years, and my father agreed to it. I was young to keep house, but I was steady as old Time. And you may think how the business prospered and increased with me when I tell you that the sum I paid over to Mrs Murgatroyd in the fifth year was nearly double the sum I had to pay to her the first. She made a hard bargain with me, but I kept it to the letter. That is the way, Winny: VOL. III.

if you enter into an agreement, stick to it. Never attempt to retreat from an undertaking, though it be turning ever so much to your disadvantage. Credit and confidence are indispensable to success in business.'

Winny acquiesced in her mother's maxims of trade morality, and continued her investigations of her early experiences: 'Was your own home far from Hulton, mother? Tell me something of your own home.'

'It was six miles from Hulton, quite amongst the hills. While my mother was alive, and as long as I was an apprentice, I used to ride home on Saturday evenings in summer, and ride back on Monday morning—it was the miller's white horse I rode, and he got a day in the country, like me. You have seen my olive cloth habit and my hat in the yellow chest—I used to make my journeys to London in them, travelling by the mail-coach.'

'And was it in that way you met my father?'

'Oh no! I met him the first time at a Twelfth Night party, where we drew characters—it was at the mayor's house. I was Miss Rivière then, and anybody's equal in Hulton. My sister Bessy was with me, and Mr Rutherford was there who married her soon after.'

'And my grandfather Rivière? and my grandmother? I have never heard anything of when you were a girl, mother?'

'Your grandfather died before I left Hulton, and your grandmother died some years before him. He was a very silent man—I remember, when it poured with rain, how he used to go down the fields, and open the sluices—there are becks and streams in that country which become roaring torrents in winter. When it thundered, he always lifted his hat—he said God uttered His voice in the storm. If he had been out for the day his first word would be: "Where is your mother?" or if he saw none of us, he would call up the stairs: "Mary! Wife! where are you?" I think I can hear him now! He never, so to speak, held up his head again after she died.'

'I like to hear of such affection—it makes their lives lovely,' Winny said, looking with softened eyes in her mother's face. 'Yes, Winny. We were a very large family, but while we were all together, we were not one too many. When we began to leave home, it was different. Worldly circumstances are great dividers.'

'What was my grandfather's occupation, mother—have I not heard something of cows, and your knowing how to milk?'

'Very likely. Your grandfather was a dyer by trade, but he farmed a little land besides; that and our house came to him through my mother. Our house was built of stone and timber, and stood half-way up a sloping field with a good piece taken in for garden—and down in the hollow where the beck ran, was the mill and the dye-house. You know that the woollen manufactory is carried on at Hulton, and in the neighbourhood—I have some recollection of hearing that it was planted there by a colony of poor French people who came over when there were great troubles because of religion, and that your grandfather's family was one of them.'

'Rivière-the name sounds like it,' said.

Winny musingly. 'That is a very honourable lineage. And how many were you, mother, of brothers and sisters when you were boys and girls?'

'We all lived to grow up to men and women'—we were eight. My brother William, who was the eldest, took to the dyeing, and Henry went into the cloth weaving with Mr Stansfield who married my sister Jane. Martha, the next in age to me, married a Mr Aylmer, and went to America, and sister Alice went with them. We received letters, and heard that Alice was married out there, and then that both the families were going further up the country. And after that no word of them ever came home again. Whether any of them are living I do not know—none of us know.'

'And we may have a colony of cousins in the backwoods, mother!'

'Yes. Your Aunt Aylmer had two children at the date of the last letter. Sister Eliza was the next to marry. Mr Clarkson was full ten years older, but he made her a good husband: they have three sons settled in the world, and a

daughter, and all doing well. Sister Bessy was married to Mr Rutherford from my house at Hulton. She had a home with me, and so had Eliza from the time your grandfather died until they moved to homes of their own. Then I married the last of all, and came to Cotham. And so we were all scattered, and as years have run on we have lost sight of each other, more and more. It does not seem right, but it very often is so.'

The widow Hesketh ceased her annals with a sigh of resignation to the common lot. Winny sighed too, and thought of Dick, and how easily they were letting each other go—Dick's letters, whether to his mother or his sister, were now quite rare events.

Susan looked in at the door, and asked if they knew the night was getting on for eleven o'clock—she had fallen asleep, and had woke up again, feeling cold, to find her fire gone out.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FEMALE INDEPENDENCE.

THERE was no more reference between the widow Hesketh and her daughter to that change of work for a living which has been hinted at. Winny mentioned it to Mrs Fleetwood, her old friend and adviser, who was still clear-headed, though sadly disabled with asthma and rheumatic-gout. Mrs Fleetwood exclaimed against the notion: 'My dear Winny, it is incredible! You don't suppose it possible for yourself, I hope? What can you be thinking of, you and your mother!'

'My mother thinks, in the first place, of my wish to stay at home with her, and she certainly does *not* think trudging off in the rain to my teaching so desirable as guiding a warm and comfortable business indoors. From the beginning she set her face against my scribbling,

and nothing will convert her from the belief that it is a rather dubious way of earning money. I have laid favourable criticisms in her way in the hope that she would read them, and modify her opinions, but the manœuvre has failed. I don't think she has ever looked at one of them.'

'She was always an obstinate woman, but you must positively not yield to her,' Mrs Fleetwood said.

'I don't think I must,' Winny answered meditatively. 'My tastes are formed, and my habits settled. If I were a failure in my vocation there might be much to say in favour of trying another, but I am not a failure. I make enough to keep both my mother and myself, if she would only condescend to let me do it. The expedient she has devised for giving me my own way would enable her to share in the work, and so would preserve her cherished independence. She never will put off her shoes until she dies!'

'I cannot hear of your coming down in the world, Winny—it would be a coming down to

burn your pen and take to needle-work,' expostulated the ex-actress. 'And there is another consideration—you do not know the trade, and would not have a right to expect the success your mother had, who was one of the most tasteful of women when first I knew her. Her own dress and appearance must have been an attractive advertisement.'

'I am not above any sort of work, when necessity is the spur to it, but I am not prone to voluntary and capricious movements. My Uncle Hayland thinks fiction a sin, and the writing of fiction a leading into sin of idle young people. My mother asks me of what use it is—but I might ask the same of millinery—if I dared. Mr Nicholls condemned fiction; and so does the missionary-lady, Mrs Wedge, who comes round to collect subscriptions, and leave tracts. She gazes at me with mournful concern, and insinuates warnings of the account to be rendered of misspent hours. I agree with her, and my mother shakes her head.'

'I have no patience with these puritans and gospel-gossips who take on them to contemn

the amusements they don't care for!' cried Mrs Fleetwood. 'You can see their pride in the dejected cut and colour of their clothes; but, bless you, harlequin and columbine are, perhaps less worldly-minded in the sight of the angels! · Such nonsense will be the ruin of you if you listen to it! Your mother does not understand what she would have you forego. Your book was very pretty—and people think something of a pretty book. We have our faults in England, but honest fame commonly gets its due; and though you will hardly make a competence, you may enjoy the best simple pleasures of life—which I reckon to be books, leisure, and the association of cultivated people. Besides, your talent is a gift, and you have no right to hide it. Have I said enough? I know your mother will not bear to see you go out in the cold and snow, and, indeed, you must not risk it-health before everything, my dear! Be advised, and make another effort away from Cotham.'

Winny acquiesced, though she could not help but feel rueful over her prospects. What a life was this of new starts and fresh beginnings, of odds and ends, and shreds and patches—for her, too, who was enamoured of continuity even to sameness! Her mother expressed nothing but satisfaction when she heard that she was making renewed exertions to find another resident engagement.

'You must not suppose, dear Winny, that I love you the less because I wish you to live in a family rather than to run about Cotham giving lessons,' the widow said. 'I wish it for your good. You do not see it yet, but you will see it.'

Winny assuredly did not see how what she so heartily disliked could be for her good—unless in the ultimate way that Miss Denham suggested. It was with a soft blush on her withered cheeks that Mrs Hesketh explained her own views as being similar to Miss Denham's, and why.

'You have never given it a thought, Winny, but I have many a time, and have felt not a little mortified for you. Has Mrs Brunton invited you once to tea since you left the Manor

School? Was there never a party at Miss Denham's house during your holidays to which your friend might have been permitted to ask you?'

Winny began to perceive the drift of her mother's sentiments, and said rather impatiently: 'Oh, mother, never mind!'

'But I do mind, Winny. If our old friends the Baxters and Knoxes and Mrs Fleetwood were gone, who would you have in Cotham to speak to?

'Plenty of people, if I could be in any way useful or ornamental to them.'

'We have lived in Cotham poor and despised for many years—you will never have any society in this place, Winny.'

'I was not aware that anybody despised us—we are not obtrusive. We go nowhere, except to church. When I am amongst people I enjoy it, but I don't weary when alone. I take a book, and find myself in the best of company. I shall miss Delphine Mercier and Georgie, but on such losses we must count. Are you disposed to leave Cotham, mother?'

'I, Winny? Certainly not. I trust it will please God to let me end my days here, in the house to which your father brought me when I was married. I am too old to be transplanted now.'

'Then Cotham must be my home, society or none. And for my part, mother, I desire no other friends than those we have.'

The widow Hesketh's discontent on Winny's behalf was silenced by this conversation, but within a day or two afterwards Winny had a rather humiliating experience of the slight social esteem in which an ex-governess may be held, who is personally beloved and respected. Mrs Broome invited her to go for one night to Hall Green. The Caradocs were there, and Winny went gladly anticipating a delightful evening with the girls. Mrs Caradoc and Clemmy called for her in the carriage, and they arrived at the house about half an hour before dinner. and went immediately to dress. Mrs Broome received Miss Hesketh graciously, and told her to go into the schoolroom when she was ready, and there she would find Bee, and the little

Mervyns, with Miss Ducie, the new governess.

Winny made herself beautiful, and did as she was bidden. The schoolroom tea was set out in the old familiar style, and the little Mervyns, four of them, sat round the table waiting to begin. Miss Ducie was shy in her plain morning gown, but Bee was chatty in white muslin and blue ribbons, and said the curate was coming to dine, and Cousin Alick was staying in the house. Winny said she should be pleased to see Cousin Alick again—it did not occur to her at the moment that she was not invited to dine too; but after an awkward pause, Miss Ducie said, would she not sit down, and Bee gave her the place of honour reserved for visitors. Winny's face betrayed some surprise which was reflected upon Bee's in confusion, but the young lady dissembled it, and began to admire Winny's dress and the fine old lace that formed its trimming: 'You always did wear such nice ruffles and frills,' said she. Winny had, indeed, put on her best as for a grand day.

Miss Ducie was filling the cups, and Bee was cutting bread and butter when the door opened, and in came the whole family and the guests-Mr and Mrs Broome, Mr and Mrs Caradoc. Clemmy, Sissy, the curate and Cousin Alick who greeted his former acquaintance with much satisfaction. Mr Broome hoped the young ones were going to have high tea to celebrate Miss Hesketh's visit, and investigating the table discovered marmalade and current buns plenty of good things, he said. The absurdity of her position tickled Winny's sense of fun, and with bright eyes full of laughter and mischief, she assured him that such handsome entertainment must make its mark in all their memories—it certainly would in hers. lively speech had a rather disconcerting effect. The party retired with some precipitation, Mrs Broome returning for a hasty moment to express a hope that Miss Hesketh would join them in the drawing-room at nine o'clock.

Winny had been looking forward to a happy evening with her former pupils, and behold her consigned to the society of the little Mervyns and a strange governess who sulkily resented her predecessor's inhospitable usage as an insult to the whole profession. Bee went to dessert. and one by one, the children were summoned to the nursery and bed. It was in October, the time of dark evenings before thrifty housekeepers have begun to allow fires in secondary rooms, but it was cold enough for a fire, and Winny, unaccustomed to be stinted of that comfort, shuddered before the black and empty grate. The schoolroom looked blank and dreary by miserable candle-light, and all her aversion to the life of schoolrooms and to service in other people's houses received a fresh Miss Ducie was too dismal and impetus. dejected to talk agreeably. Miss Hesketh bore disappointment and starvation with her usual philosophy, but when Sissy came upstairs by and by, to escort her down, she declined to go.

'No, thank you, Sis, I must be excused. I will finish my evening here,' said she.

'Oh, do come! There is a beautiful fire in the drawing-room, and you are so cold,' Sissy urged. But Winny's spirits had fallen to zero, and she could not be prevailed on to move. Sissy went away discomfited, and the girls, discoursing together afterwards on the disappointment Miss Hesketh's visit must have been to her, agreed that mamma was ridiculous, in asserting the distinctions of rank.

Mrs Hesketh was quick to discern when Winny had not been pleased, and Winny, contrary to her practice of keeping petty annoyances to herself, indulged her with a laughable account of the entertainment she had found at Hall Green.

The widow was indignant. 'It was a great impertinence—Mrs Broome is a most impertinent woman,' said she. 'You shall never incur such insolent treatment again with my leave, Winny.'

'I shall not go to Hall Green any more, mother. You had much better let me stay by our own home-fireside—it is warmer in every sense,' Winny answered; and her present argument did not admit of any sound rejoinder.

VOL. III.

By one of those odd coincidences that do happen sometimes in spite of their improbability, within a week after Winny Hesketh had put the question to her mother, whether she was disposed to leave Cotham, an opportunity that was half a temptation presented itself. There called upon the widow a gentleman of the neighbourhood, a Mr Danby, whose errand was to inquire if she would sell her house. was the intending purchaser of the house adjoining, which had a space of garden in the rear of her premises, and he wished to have the whole frontage to Castle Green. The proposal took Mrs Hesketh by surprise. She said that she had no desire to sell her house. Mr Danby mentioned the price he was prepared to give for it, which was so much beyond what she had bought it for years ago, that she paused upon the offer, and asked time to talk it over with her daughter. Mr Danby assented, and informed her of the average rent of suburban houses, enclosed by fore-courts and gardens, commodious enough for her family. With a degree of hauteur Mrs Hesketh put aside what

sounded like advice, and replied that she was the best judge of what would suit her family—her furniture would be out of character in one of those 'card-built little boxes'—it was solid and handsome, and looked well in the spacious old-fashioned house to which it had been fitted, but it would crowd a 'villa,' and leave no room to move about. Mr Danby said: 'Yes, yes,' and escaped.

When Winny came in from her teaching her mother reported what had happened in her absence. At the first blush Winny did not like the idea. Then she inclined towards it suddenly. 'O mother, do! Let us have a cottage out Holworth way, and live together. Susan will go with us, and you need have no more trouble with invalid lodgers.'

'Live together—and, pray, how are we to live? On your little wits, I suppose?' said the widow with a kindly sarcasm to which she now often treated Winny. Winny did not resent it.

'Partly on my little wits,' said she. 'But you would have your own income, and the

interest of the money Mr Danby offers for this house besides. You might sink it, and buy an annuity. The cost of keeping me—my share of expenses—I should throw into the common stock.'

'You talk very well, Winny—but there are a variety of other things to be considered,' rejoined her mother in a tone meant to discourage further expatiation on that head.

Winny was silent for a minute or two, then glancing round the familiar room, she said meditatively: 'I shall be sorry to see the last of the old house. It is so picturesque, inside and out—and comfortable too. What can Mr Danby want with it? Not to occupy it himself? The Danbys are Roman Catholics.'

'You have not seen the last of the old house yet, Winny,' said her mother.

Winny never was to see the last of it in that sense. During the interval allowed her for consideration it came to Mrs Hesketh's knowledge that the houses on Castle Green were being purchased for removal—to make way for a new Roman Catholic Church. The

only one existing in Cotham then was a very poor place, hidden out of sight in an obscure Mrs Wedge was the widow's informant, and Winny was present when that lady, who kept a watch of terror on the encroachments of Popery, produced her intelligence. She looked at her mother, and saw her countenance settle into an invincible determination. When Mr Danby called again she was ready with her answer. She thanked him for his liberal offer for her house, but she had decided to keep it. The gentleman was visibly disappointed and aggrieved, and became urgent in his representations of the benefit which would accrue to herself, and which, being missed now, might never be within her reach again.

'Sir,' said she, 'it is of no use talking. My mind is made up. If you talk till doomsday, I shall not alter it.'

It was quite unnecessary for Winny to ask why. She had discovered what she called a dear little house of red brick and tiled, standing gable-end to the Holworth road not far from the bridge; it had a large old garden with a wall next the highway, and hedges next the fields. It had gnarled apple-trees and pear-trees, box-borders and sweet-briar bushes; and it had a rustic porch, not to mention every capability of being made a warm, cool, cosy abode within. paradise was to be sold or let: it was to be bought for a little over half the sum that was at Mrs Hesketh's refusal for the house on Castle Green. Winny inveigled her mother to go and look at it (this was before Mrs Wedge had spoken) and as the time a delicate afternoon in October, it appeared a charming retreat. The widow gazed upon it with a favourable aspect, sauntered round the weedy walks, and drew a picture of it in spring, cleared out and made neat, with snowdrops and crocuses coming up.

'I love neatness in a garden,' said she.
'And you could have flowers to your heart's content, Winny.' Her humour was most propitious. Winny let her fancy run away with her into the far future.

- 'I shall delight in it! We shall settle down, and live happily ever afterwards!' was her visionary conclusion.
- 'If you were forty years old you might talk so, but it is early days with you yet,' her mother said.

They walked back to the town composedly—perhaps, this was the placid seclusion where the widow was to end her anxious days. She even mentioned that in that old house her good old furniture would do, and specified which pieces she should feel most difficulty in parting with. Winny fitted quite into her mood.

'We need part with nothing—we need leave nothing behind us; and all we shall want new is some sprigged chintz or buff twilled cotton to cover the sitting-room couch and chairs in summer. O mother! I imagine us there—and think of the lovely mornings—me picking peas, and you shelling them!'

'Say gathering peas, Winny, not picking peas,' remonstrated the widow, and Winny sweetly echoed the correction.

The very next day came Mrs Wedge's announcement, and utterly demolished the unsubstantial fabric of Winny's dream. It did not occur to her to expostulate. She probably had a milder strain of her mother's inbred prejudice against the Roman Catholic religion. and to promote it, and make a gain of her habitation by selling it to a profit for the erection of a new church to be dedicated to that worship, her conscience would have construed as an unworthy act. When Mrs Wedge heard by report that Mrs Hesketh had refused to let Mr Danby have her house, she came in a hurry to offer her testimonial of praise and approval. The widow had not said a word of her motive, not even to Winny, and if she had an aversion for anything, it was that a superior should commend her for doing what she She checked Mrs believed to be a duty. Wedge's bitter, pious fluency with considerable vigour.

'There are many excellent, devoted persons amongst the Roman Catholics, and some of their old books are better than any of the new ones I read nowadays. But it suits me to remain where I am, and I beg not to hear another word of the matter.'

'Oh!' said Mrs Wedge with a disconcerted air. Winny could not help smiling—she guessed that the good lady felt herself most unkindly deprived of a useful story of Protestant devotion and self-sacrifice on the part of a poor widow woman, which it would have given her intense satisfaction to narrate. But the poor widow's desire for silence was obeyed.

The pleasant little house in the suburbs was mentioned no more, and in a few days was as much out of mind as if it had never been heard of; but the passing of the vision left Winny a want of sunshine to begin the winter. This winter was a season of almost adversity to her. Life's task-work and its minor cares can weigh the heart down no less than its great troubles. She had not been successful in finding an engagement in the south, though she was become as earnest in the pursuit as even her mother could desire. For the widow insisted

that she should relinquish her daily occupation across the Green when the cold weather began, and now that she saw Winny's efforts were genuine she did not tax her with complaints of failure. Mrs Hesketh could bear more resignedly with her daughter's ill-luck than with her opposition; and she was constantly hoping that something would turn up.

Winny was very melancholy—as melancholy, that is, as a young woman can be working hard with her brains all day. Whatever her mother's opinion of scribbling in the abstract she could not call Winny's scribbling idleness any longer—in fact, speaking to Susan in private, she called it: 'Perfect slavery.'

The array of big books and old books from the town-library with which Winny at this period sat constantly surrounded made a show that she was engaged in some work of immense research and solidity. Now and then, she was heard to talk to herself—that is, to mention aloud some date or circumstance that she wanted to fix in her memory, and occasionally she was so absorbed that she did

not hear when she was spoken to. Such manifestations were far from comfortable to the widow who had made herself acquainted with the pains and penalties of the literary life to an extent that Winny was not at all aware of. This task occupied her most of the days while she was altogether at home; but some mornings she sat as if at play, with a rapid quill pen and a folio sheet, which very soon became a post-parcel, then a printed proof, a tale in a magazine, and finally a slip of pale green paper of representative money value. After each of these excursions into the region of fiction (and profit) Winny reverted to the big books and her voluminous extracts.

It happened late one afternoon while she was thus employed that Mrs Wedge came in to visit Mrs Hesketh. In her daughter's absence the widow enjoyed the visits of Mrs Wedge, but Winny was prejudiced against her, and there was always a fear lest she should say something satirical—something better left unsaid. Curled round on the table at Winny's elbow was the house-cat, who much affected

her equiet company. The missionary-lady glanced over the general arrangement, and remarked with kindly superiority: 'That looks, Miss Winifred, as if you were attempting to write something better worth than novels.'

'Does it?' Winny said, laying her cheek on pussy's sleek, soft coat with a sigh of weariness. 'I often ask why I should bake a batch of probably inferior bread when my customers only desire of me tarts.'

'I do not know what you mean,' said Mrs Wedge. Winny did not interpret her dark saying; she rested her sad eyes on a pile of small volumes in gay, cloth covers, biographies, for the most part, of obscure saints canonised in sectarian conclave, which the district-visitor was on her round to distribute. One in red and gold had been selected, and laid down by the widow's knitting at her first coming in. She observed the direction of Winny's gaze, and said, laying a hand on her property: 'These are true bread—bread, the staff of life. There is substance and sustenance in these.'

Winny shook a slow, disbelieving pate: 'Puff paste and jam every one of them, dear Mrs Wedge,' she dared to say.

Mrs Hesketh felt obliged to apologise for her daughter. Winny caressed puss, and absently took up her pen again to retire from the company. Her mother knew every sign of her face now, and said cheeringly: 'I am sure you cannot see, Winny—it is quite blindman's holiday. Come to the fireside, and warm yourself.'

'I can see very well yet—I must get on,' Winny answered with a catch in her breath, and she re-settled herself at her desk. It seemed that the sense and pressure of necessity were overtaking her. That: 'I must get on,' rang in her mother's ears for long and long after.

What this work was that demanded such severe application Winny had not revealed to anybody—indeed, who would have cared to know, even of those who contemned her idle tales? It was out of this contemning, united with the laudable, pertinacious desire of

Clemmy Broome for historical information. that the idea was bred-a small egg of an idea, but one that promised to take a deal of hatching. It was to write a History of England for young people of intelligence, on a plan combining the charms of story with the latest information, and with fulness, clearness, and precision of statement. Already she had been at it two years, and though she was not yet arrived at Queen Anne's reign the bulk of manuscript was prodigious. At Hauxwell she had found old chronicles and monkish annals, parliamentary journals, state-trials and contemporary registers, besides the compilations from them of modern authorities, and the essays and dissertations of the best and newest writers on matters constitutional, religious, and political. These she had read, marked, learned and inwardly digested on hundreds of mornings, by peep-of-dawn or candle-light, all the round spring, of summer, autumn, winter, sitting up in her bed, a ridiculous, pathetic spectacle, nursing a book, and making notes

in pencil. At intervals she had enjoyed opportunities of combining her rough materials into a flowing narrative, and she felt now that she was getting on, though there was still much to do. And when she flagged, as everybody does flag over a prolonged and toilsome effort, she encouraged herself with reflections on the respectable character of the work she was pursuing, with dreams of friendly approbation, and foolish, fond hopes that she might be making her fortune. Yet painful doubts intervened still. When she spoke of asking why she should bake a batch of probably inferior bread when her customers wanted only tarts, this was the batch she had in her mind—for thus and thus it appeared to her at those times when she fell aweary of it. The batch was now lying heavy amongst her muslins and laces in a drawer upstairs; for she kept it cautiously out of her mother's sight. Perhaps, she meant it for a grand surprise some happy day; or perhaps, she had a prevision of a grand disappointment in it. However, there the task

was, and the urgent spur to push on with it, gave her very little rest. Since she had gone so far, she must go on to the end, let the end be what it might. And this made the winter a very serious chapter of experience.

## CHAPTER VII.

## IN THE MILL.

IF Winny Hesketh laboured and suffered in spite of herself, her mother laboured and suffered by choice, but not the less positively because it was by choice. As tenants of her upper chambers she had a charitable preference for invalids. Winny had often merrily entreated her not to turn her house into an hospital, which she was tempted to do by her skill as a nurse. She had a good ally in Susan, and sure succour in case of need from Nanny Anson, but, at the best, nursing is hard service, and the widow always betrayed how much it overtaxed her when the excitement and strain of endurance were over. After each effort she made a resolution to open her doors to no more sick people, but the moment the doctor showed a hurried face in want of a refuge for a patient VOL. III.

in distress, her mind changed, and she had not the heart to refuse it.

One dry March day Winny had been out for a solitary walk, and on her return she found the house in a bustle, and was despatched to Miss Baxter's shop to have a bottle that Susan handed to her re-filled with the stuff it had contained before. Winny went on her errand quickly, as she was bidden, and was asked by Miss Maria if her mother had taken fever into the house. 'For this is a disinfectant,' explained she.

'I don't know—I did not stay to question,' Winny said. 'I saw there was a fuss on the stairs, and an iron bedstead going in, but Susan sent me off, telling me to make haste.'

Mr Cragg whispered some information to his partner who invested her face with its crossest expression, and said: 'The boy shall carry the bottle back. Go you upstairs to my sister, Winny.' And Winny having seen the boy off, did go upstairs, Miss Maria following.

The old drawing-room over the shop was

rather dingier and quainter than it used to be, but Miss Baxter sat at the window, still with her splendid silken skeins hanging from the great embroidery frame.

'What do you say now, sister? Mrs Hesketh has taken fever into the house—the last time it was measles,' Miss Maria said in her peppery way.

'Then let Winny put a few clothes together, and come here—her mother will be glad to be rid of her,' said Miss Baxter as peremptorily.

'I don't think I can quite do that,' Winny answered. She was thinking that she could not bring all her books and that blessed history here, and that she could not bear to be parted from her work.

'You must do it, Winny. What is the use of exposing yourself to the risk of infection?' snapped Miss Maria. 'It is boys—grammar-school boys again, boarders out of Mr Fanshawe's house, sister. Dr Lassells has consigned them to Mrs Hesketh's care under suspicion of scarlet fever—you may be sure

the suspicion will be verified. There is always sickness at Mr Fanshawe's.'

'It is good for trade,' replied Miss Baxter.
'Now, Winny dear, do what you are told.
You can have the back-room all to yourself, and nobody shall disturb you.'

Winny returned home, but not with the purpose of obeying her kind old friend's invitation. Her mother was coming downstairs, wearing the alert and sober aspect that characterised her on undertaking a fresh duty of importance. Winny began to untie her bonnet-strings, and said: 'Can I do anything, mother?'

'Of course, you can, Winny. While you are at home you must do something,' was the answer she received with a cheerful decision. 'You can get me out three pairs of linen sheets and pillow-cases—of the smaller size and oldest set—and bring them down to air. You have had your walk for to-day, but in the morning after breakfast, you shall go to Ripley for Nanny Anson.'

'Three pairs of sheets, mother?' Winny repeated.

'Yes. Three boys will take very little more minding than one. It is a mild attack, Dr Lassells hopes, and they can be kept altogether in the large room.'

Winny took the keys, and went up to the linen chest; and having well aired the sheets, she helped Susan to prepare a fever-ward on a small scale in the best bedroom. Before dusk the boys were brought in, rather livelier and noisier than might have been expected, which was a favourable sign. While they were being settled for the night Miss Baxter arrived, to look after Winny, and see why she had not come to her house as she had been enjoined to do.

Winny had not mentioned Miss Baxter's proposal. Her mother conjectured that she did not wish to accept it, and said: 'I do not consider it necessary for Winny to leave the house, but she can please herself.'

- 'I had much rather stay at home. I am not afraid of infection,' Winny said.
- 'It may catch you all the same, Winny. I never heard that scarlet fever respected any-

body the more for not being afraid of it,' said Miss Baxter in a huff. 'But you are exactly like your mother—it is breath wasted to reason with either of you! She will die a martyr to her devotion some day, and then you will be sorry!'

'I do not know how I could die better,' said the widow calmly; and walking out of the parlour, she left Winny to settle her business with Miss Baxter alone.

It was soon settled. Winny would not forsake Castle Green. Miss Baxter told her, then she must keep herself to herself, and not go running about into other people's houses where there were children, at the risk of carrying danger with her—and then she revoked the sentence of isolation so far as to give permission for visits to herself. There was not at this date or amongst old-fashioned people that exaggerated fear of infection that has grown into fashion of late. Mrs Hesketh had an almost superstitious adherence to duty in cases of sickness, and had often been heard to say that if any one tried to escape from death

in a house death would pursue. Winny had a similar principle, and would have suffered far more from the stings of an irritable conscience had she abandoned her home when she could be of use to her mother, than it was in her nature to suffer from the fear of any evil that might befall herself. Mrs Hesketh had ever controlled panic-fears and self-anxieties in Winny, and had made her to know and feel that the emergencies of life are too many and various for timidity to be encouraged as a graceful weakness.

But if Mrs Hesketh was not fearful she was prudent. She did not permit Winny to pass the sheets saturated in vinegar that floated over the doorway of the chamber where her fever-patients lay, and though she laid her time under contribution for other services she had nothing to do with their nursing while they continued in the infectious stage. Two of the boys had the fever so slightly that inexperience might have doubted whether they had ever had it at all; but the third was delicate to begin with, and on him it took hard hold. He

struggled through the worst, and set out on the road to recovery, but long after his comrades had been removed to the sea for purification, he lingered on, a querulous, feeble little fellow, whom Mrs Hesketh regarded with a passion of tenderness and pity such as she had never manifested to her own children under any circumstances. His father and mother were in India, and he was an only son.

As the evenings lengthened Winny spent many a half hour trying to amuse him. He was not fit to return amongst the rough boys in health, and he had no friends to whom he could be sent. Mr Fanshawe arranged with Mrs Hesketh to keep him until his parents could be communicated with. But before any answer could arrive from them the boy died, and was buried across the Green in St Stephen Martyr's churchyard. It was rare to see the widow Hesketh fret, but she fretted much during his last days and afterward. Winny took care of her. Miss Baxter said to comfort her: 'It will pass. She is quite worn out, and it is weakness. She never leaves home, so it is

useless to ask her to do that: but you must get her out for short walks in the fine weather, and she will gradually be herself again. She ought to have done with sick-nursing.'

Nanny Anson went back to Ripley, and only Winny, her mother, and Susan were left in the house. Winny thought this was as it ought to be. The lilacs and laburnums were blooming over the rectory garden wall, and sweet May mornings were come again. The incidents of this period were very few. Winny had never heard from Mr Durant nor of him since that old letter posted and re-posted, that had overtaken her at Geneva ten months ago. The diligent correspondence that had subsisted between herself and Mildred (Mrs Frank Jarvis) had dwindled to two or three brief letters in a year, all about the children (Mildred had two now), and Georgie, Mrs Harvey-Phillipps, was one of those judicious friends who never write but when they have something to say. The postman dropt more proofs and papers than anything else at the widow Hesketh's door, and Winny's days were

chiefly devoted to her pen. She might have resumed her morning teaching now, but her mother had begun to comprehend that the work she was engaged on, not only taxed her time to the utmost, but also her strength, and she did not propose that she should seek any engagement. She would ask her, now and then, if her eyes did not ache with all that writing, but she no longer spoke sarcastically, and her look at Winny was compassionate.

More persons than her mother felt a sort of pity for Winny Hesketh at this period. She had said a few words one day about the pleasantness of having the house to themselves, and her mother had rejoined: 'Well then, Winny, we will have it to ourselves, and you shall keep it. But you will very soon find that a small house has a large swallow.'

A truer word was never spoken. While Winny had no expenses and no cares beyond her personal needs those welcome slips of pale green paper, in addition to her salary, had made of her quite a rich woman; but when the tax-gatherer wanted one, and the rate-

collector wanted another, and Susan presented her with the monthly books of butcher, baker, grocer and miscellaneous purveyor, she did not reserve any margin to make ducks and drakes of as she used to do. Of a sudden, her mother seemed to have resigned herself to be done for, and cherished and tended. She gave all up to her daughter, and Winny had not only to bear the strain, but to hide that there was any strain. And she did hide it very effectually. Midsummer stole upon them living in this quiet way. There was a question, when gooseberries were ripe, whether Mrs Hesketh could walk out so far as Holworth Grange now, but she said: 'You make your mother quite an old woman, Winny: I can walk to Holworth and back as well as ever I did.'

So they went to drink tea with their friends, and Winny thought it as much a treat as when she was a little girl. She had seen finer company and more geometrical gardens since she grew up, but she still loved those fragrant medley borders, where stocks and sweet-williams shouldered the sweet-briar, and lilies

and hollyhocks nodded over crowds of cabbage roses. Mr Knox walked with a stick, and talked less than formerly, and Mrs Fleetwood dozed in pauses of the conversation, but was still acute when her eyes were open. She said to Winny: 'You look very quiet, my dear, and your cheek is losing its rose. Don't let your writing engross you too much. Remember, there are nearly three hundred working days in the year.'

Mrs Knox, in her creasy silk dress and pink bows, was sprightly and moral in her tone as ever: 'We are going down hill, Mrs Hesketh. There is a failing in my poor master since the last time you drank tea at the Grange,' she said. There was a failing in the lady too, but she was, perhaps, less conscious of it.

'Yes, Mrs Knox, I am sorry to see it. We are none of us so young as we have been,' replied the widow.

'What might your age be, ma'am, if it is not a liberty?' asked Mr Knox halting on his stick, and frowning feebly.

- 'If it please God to spare me until my next birthday I shall be fifty-three, sir.'
- 'And on the sixth of August I shall enter my eightieth year,' said the gentleman, and tottered away chuckling.

His wife shook her head, and mentioned confidentially that he was, 'Childish, quite childish.'

'It is a fine thing to say that he has kept his faculties so long,' Mrs Hesketh replied. The widow had a youthful appearance amongst these septuagenarians. Her daughter contemplated her with satisfaction. Since she had laid by her anxiousness to rest upon Winny, her countenance was, at times, most beautifully placid and serene. Life might have left her nothing to desire. She caught Winny's eye, gave her a smile and a cheerful nod, and remarked that the walk home in the cool of the evening would be pleasant, and she should enjoy it.

There was more solemnity than usual in the leave-taking; for, indeed, it was a chance whether those who were parting would ever meet again altogether in the same place. The

big posy of scented flowers and the basket of ripe fruit were ready when they went, and Winny carried both. The evening was very sweet and still. The bells of the parish church were chiming in the distance softly. Behind the giant poplars in the hedgerow the sky was banked with violet and amber clouds. The sound of the bells brought back many thoughts of long ago.

'Let us take our time, Winny, there is no hurry,' said the widow as they drew within sight of the town. 'Your father and I often took this walk in the summer evenings the year we were married. He was fond of the sunset and the river down beyond the poplars. He would always stop on the bridge to look at the view.'

'Were you married in the spring, mother?' Winny asked, slackening her pace which had quickened insensibly.

'Yes; in the early spring, when the birds pair.' The widow talked about her wedding-day, and all the hopeful, gay circumstances of it as if a renewed pleasure were in the recollection. 'I had no idea Mr Knox was so old,' Winny presently remarked.

'Mr and Mrs Knox were elderly people when I came to Cotham. And Mrs Fleetwood is older than her brother. The last generation was stronger than this. Every generation gets weaker than the generation before it, I think,' said her mother.

Winny smiled at this as a delusion—but she had many mistaken notions herself. One of them she was at this moment silently recognising and correcting; namely, that their friends at the Grange, the Baxters and her mother were all contemporaries, and nearly of an age. It was a mistaken notion such as often possesses young people with regard to their parents and their elders generally. Winny discerned that her mother would not have felt pleased to know it.

At the next seat before the bridge she proposed that they should rest, and while they were resting, Mr Radstock, who since his retirement from business lived out in this direction, joined them. 'You have been paying a visit

to the country to-day,' he said, glancing at the nosegay.

'An annual visit, Mr Radstock, to Holworth Grange,' replied the widow.

'The Grange is a delightful place. My wife has told me that you frequently walk this way—it will be a pleasure to her if you will go in and rest; and the young lady can step round the garden and gather a few flowers. I think we can match the Grange for pinks and gilliflowers,' said the generous old man. 'It is a long while since we have met, but I presume it must be your daughter, Mrs Hesketh, from her growing likeness to yourself?'

Winny thanked him, and said: 'It was to me you gave the white Paisley shawl with the palm-leaf border, Mr Radstock—don't you remember?—because I was beginning the world.'

'Ah, yes! How time gets on! It was the last day I had to spend in the shop. A pretty little rosy girl you were—and the shawl wears well?'

'Beautifully. It is as good as new still. It will last me my life, I think.'

'Why, I hope not, I hope not,' said Mr Radstock, as if deprecating the notion. His business-eye readily appraised the cost of Winny's dress—a pale grey alpaca at two shillings the yard, a white muslin scarf, a grey chip bonnet with a blue bow—her Sunday suit, very neat, but not expensive. The pretty little rosy girl was gone, but a pretty gentle woman had developed from her merry bright eyes, round cheeks, and dimpled plumpness. To some of her friends Winny was much prettier now than then; but her prettiness, like her literary reputation, was not worth much to her, because nobody she cared for seemed to care for it at all.

Though it was nine o'clock when they arrived at Castle Green, Winny cast a glance at her writing-table, and then approached it with a busy air. 'You are not going to your work to-night, Winny, surely?' said her mother.

'Yes; I might as well. Every hour counts for something now,' was the reply.

VOL. III. K

- 'You must be quite tired enough as it is,' the widow continued to urge.
- 'No. I feel in the mood. I did not accomplish much this morning, and I shall sleep the better for having done my proper quantity.'
- 'I do hope you are not letting your work interfere with your sleep, Winny?'
- 'That is just as it happens. I do not lie awake often—I try not.'
- 'You should say over a few verses of a psalm, or one of the hymns you used to know—you have not forgotten them?'

Winny was now deep in her papers, and only said: 'Hum!' in an abstracted tone. Susan brought in her lamp, freshly trimmed; for Winny had her own rules and hours now, and sat up as late as she pleased. And sometimes it pleased her to sit up very late, and to wake again as early. Susan did not like this at all. A slight and suppressed but not unfrequent irritability began to betray that the toilsome monotony of her young mistress's life was doing her harm, but she never seemed to notice this irritability, nor did Mrs Hesketh.

They regretted it to each other, but when Winny was impatient, they were silent, and made things smoother if possible.

Miss Baxter said to her one day, in a voice of most affectionate warning, 'I trust, Winny dear, this will not prove to be misdirected labour!'

'It cannot be helped if it do,' Winny answered with the indifference of extreme fatigue.

Nanny Anson, who came to Castle Green every Saturday morning with butter and eggs to sell, and a posy for her nursling, was the only person who ventured on direct remonstrance. 'Don't go and overdo it, my joy,' she urged on one occasion when she found her at her desk. Nanny never failed to leave her basket in the kitchen, and to pay a visit to the parlour; and Winny put down her pen, leant back in her chair, listened, rested, and felt happy to be lectured by the old servant who loved her.

'No, Nanny, I will not overdo it,' she answered with her sweet, serious smile.

'I am not so sure of that. I know the head-

ache writing a letter to my sister brings on with me, and I never can believe that to sit so dree at your writing can be good for you. You should go out, and take a bit of pleasure oftener.'

'I will come and have tea with you one afternoon next week if you will have me, Nanny?'

'Come and welcome, but that's not what I mean. There's a Flower-show in the gardens on Tuesday afternoon, and a Concert at night in the Town Hall. I see the bills up in the town. Why shouldn't you be going to 'em both, like other young ladies? You're fond of singing and music, aren't you, my joy?'

'Yes, but I have no companion since Delphine Mercier was married. You know, Nanny, that my mother never goes anywhere. I should feel quite lost amongst smart Cotham people. I am much better out of their gaieties—I don't covet them. And when I get my work off my mind that I am busy with, I'll take a holiday.'

'And it will be high time you should! Susan and your mother complain that you slave from morning till night, like a horse in a mill, that you hardly ever open your mouth to speak, and when you are called to your meals you are always to wait for. Men may do it, and take no harm—it is their nature to; but women should stir about, more lively, like. They get anxious else, and troubled about what should be no trouble at all.'

'Well, Nanny, I know, but let me alone. I shall soon have done now—good-bye. Get away, or you will lose the market.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BURRS AND THISTLES-GEORGIE MARRIED.

THE sorrows of life recorded in stories are mostly concerned with the tender passion, but there are others that go quite as near killing. It was a cruel moment when Winny Hesketh bowed to the necessity of spending the first instalment of her economies (indeed, she wiped her eyes twice during the short process of writing her signature at the back of a deposit-receipt), but she went to the bank with a serene countenance afterwards, and kept the transaction entirely to herself. That blessed history seemed to stretch longer before her the more 'she laboured at it. Oh, what interminable involvement of incident was there to make plain as the past drew on to the present. It devoured the summer days and the autumn, and was soon again encroaching on the winter nights.

this time her friends knew what she was doing, and Mrs Wedge provoked her often with a gurgle of praise because she had turned aside from the seductive paths of fiction into the region of valuable, dry facts.

Winny had not left the beguiling paths of fiction altogether, or her life would have been more of a burden than it was. That December there occurred a most terrible storm of wind. She was out in the fury of it, walking by the river, which rolled turbid and swollen between its banks, lapping the seared grasses and threatening a flood such as Cotham always suffered once or twice in the winter. There was something in the gloomy roar and rush which stimulated her imagination. She thought of poor souls houseless in it, of poor souls friendless and most miserable. Then the recollection of the Lake of Neufchâtel returned to her, then of Mrs Ross-Browne: and she saw a series of scenes in the life of a woman subject to such griefs as hers, but without blame, and nobly bearing them. That inspiration ran into the mould of a story in the next four days, and brought an accession

of ten guineas to her treasury as a Christmas story. But immense was her dismay when its publication was followed by a letter from Mrs Ross-Browne, franticly vituperating the use that her dolorous experiences had been put to. Winny's heroine was reported of as handsome and charming, as endowed with all the feminine graces and most of the robust virtues, a character which was not commonly ascribed to poor Mrs Ross-Browne; but she claimed it as her own, and founded a grievance on it which did excellently well to rail about. Winny could not bluntly tell her that she flattered herself too much, but she suggested that if she said nothing, no one else would say anything either; for the central figure and the pathetic circumstances in which it was set were purely fictitious, and the traits of resemblance in the general details must be common to domestic squabbles. She studied her own story to discover the cause of offence, and arrived at the conclusion that it must consist rather in the difference than in the likeness. Still she did not deny that but for her meeting with

Mrs Ross-Browne it would not have been written; that lady being the only person she knew in a position to reveal to her the cruel hardships under which a wife may groan before the law will relieve her, and society look over her domestic revolt.

Winny wrote to Mrs Harvey-Phillipps an account of the issue she had prophesied. Georgie chuckled, and bade her be thankful to have done with her casual acquaintance; adding that a copy of the letter had been sent to her-it being a way Mrs Ross-Browne had to take the world into her confidence by circulating copies of any rhetorical effort that especially pleased her. This vexed Winny; for the letter was a flourish of false assumptions as well as of abuse. But Georgie, airing her superior wisdom, advised her friend not to care, and, quoting her husband, reported that Harvey said it was like Mrs Ross-Browne's impudence, a farrago of lies and nonsense, when she was in a mood to have a sensation. Winny soon forgot it in the mazes of her history. There is nothing like

work that one must be constant at for diverting the mind from vexations past remedy.

But on the question of how far it is justifiable to work from facts when writing fiction Winny reflected afterwards a good deal. It was her method to sketch from nature when she described a place or time of day, making her vignettes on all sorts of chance occasions, and people told her that these descriptions were literal as photographs. She never ventured into the haunts of fashion, into law-courts or dens of thieves, never having been there. She confined herself to the life and conditions of life that she was intimate with, and attempted strong effects but rarely. Her moralities almost always grew out of her observations of character and circumstances, and it was in these moralities that she unwittingly fitted caps to her friends; she meant them as truisms for general application, and somebody, now and then, sorted them out and redistributed them to the individuals from whom they were derived. A personal infirmity or a family disgrace she would absolutely respect, but she called petty trickery,

meanness, malignity, and injustice fair game, and as her fancy was not alert at that class of inventions, she would lay hands on facts, and show them up with an incisiveness that was apt to tell. Mrs Ross-Browne was the first person who had taken violent umbrage, but soon after a gentleman wrote rather impetuously to ask why she had made use of the name of his dear only son (the only man of the name in England) for a character in a tale who began by being a poacher, and ended by being an assassin? Winny blushed in perplexity—the name had caught her eye in a list of subscribers to the funds of a charitable corporation, and she had adopted it as appropriate. She answered the letter with a confession of the truth.

At Christmas that year Mrs Harvey-Phillipps revisited Cotham and her father's house. Georgie still looked her old self, though her originalities were toned down. She came to see Winny Hesketh one afternoon without previous notice, and found her sitting before an orderly assortment of papers, of which she

appeared to be making a final revision. Georgie glanced from her to them with astonished, uplifted brows, and asked what they were all about. Winny was only too glad to tell her. At first she had been reserved, but now she had reached that pass when she was relieved to talk of her work, and, while half-conscious of the effect she produced, would go on remorselessly until she tired out everybody who began to listen. This afternoon she had read through the Commonwealth period, and was satisfied with it, which made her feel very happy. Georgie took her to be in excellent case.

'Hard work will never be the death of you, Winny! I have not seen a pair of brighter eyes for a long while,' said she.'

Winny was pleased. 'They are like my mother's, and brighten for a very little. Is Cromwell a hero of yours, Georgie?'

'Why, no—I never loved those puritanical gentry. The cavaliers for me!' was Georgie's answer.

'Are you in earnest? King Charles was illserved by some of his friends. There is not a nan in history for whom I feel such an ache of ympathy as for Cromwell in his latter days—unless it be Queen Elizabeth. I like trong characters, and when they are breaking lown under troubles and infirmities—drawing owards death'—— Winny checked herself at in amused gleam in Georgie's face. 'You are aughing at me!' she said in a voice of reproach.

'I was thinking how pretty you are still; nothing worse, on my honour,' Georgie asseverated. 'If you have a page or two of Cromwell handy I am open to conversion.' And she magnanimously read through not only the page or two that Winny, trembling with nodest delight, offered for her perusal, but she asked for more, and was interested enough to read to the end of the chapter. 'It is very good,' said she, 'you will have all the girls in tears. Then you have gone in for the revoutionary party?'

'I have not gone in for any party. I have ried to tell the truth of all parties, and to write in a judicial spirit.' Georgie contemplated the carpet for a change from Winny's face, which grew pale and earnest as she spoke. She betrayed to this keen observer how much was set on the issue of her laborious task, and Georgie very kindly wished her good luck. But in her own mind she greatly doubted the wisdom that had urged her to quit her fields of fancy.

'My publisher has promised to print it—my only fear is that he will be alarmed by its length. There is as much manuscript as would print into four three-volume novels. But then girls have not only to learn history, but to learn to read, and their years between nine and four-teen are long years. I can recite whole pages out of Goldsmith, with scenes from Shakespeare to match. I cannot endure the skeleton histories to teach from. They lay hold neither on the memory nor the imagination.'

Georgie sighed ever so softly, but she did not interrupt her companion, who went on till she was in a state of odd excitement, Georgie becoming graver every moment. The entrance of Susan with two cups of coffee and biscuits on a tray broke the thread of Winny's discourse, and over that refreshment she diverged to personal themes. Georgie was more than willing to change the subject.

'How is it that I seem to have lost sight of you in your letters—such dry chips of letters,' said she. 'Why don't you write as you used to write?'

'You are married now. And what sort of letters do you write to me? Few or none at all,' was Winny's reproachful answer.

'Married!' echoed Georgie, with a face laughing yet rueful. 'Winny, take my word for it—the first six months of marriage are the most disenchanting of a clever woman's life!'

'Pity you could not skip them, and begin with the second half year. But you are through the worst now, Georgie.' Winny spoke in her ironical tone.

'Thank God, we are through the worst! Don't mock, it was serious enough. If Harvey had not had the patience of a philosopher and the wit of a physician, I must have broken loose; oh, I was exquisitely bored! It is a cruel discipline, for a woman who loves her own way, and has had it in her father's house. Papa had to interfere twice.

'Did not the profession console you?'

'I am not allowed to meddle with the profession. Harvey says I have not an idea of the nonsense I talk when I begin on the profession. But I do know a little. Since my marriage, however, one fact impresses me inexorably—we can never go beyond the limits of our sex, nor even reach them except as complementary of the other; and the more we strain to compass the impossible, the more of real and available power we waste.'

'Don't be perplexing, Georgie; who is to understand you?' remonstrated Winny. 'I never said we were as tall as men or as strong, did I! Those were your crotchets—perfect equality of the sexes.'

'My married role is that of the woman of society—I dance, I play, I sing, I talk. We have a large circle of highly desirable ac-

BURRS AND THISTLES—GEORGIE MARRIED. 161

quaintances, and a small circle of friends. Harvey is very popular.'

'And his wife is popular too,' said Winny.
'You were the most popular of all the girls at the old Manor School.'

'I wish we were back in those days! Harvey likes a cheerful house, and I have nothing to do but to cultivate cheerfulness. I have no friend of choice out of doors. If you lived in London, what a resource you would be to me!'

'But I am a fixture at Cotham—I have not been from home since I came back after our tour.'

'Poor Winny! What a terribly dull life! You should take a run down to Rockbro'. We were there last autumn, and met nearly all our Cotham friends. How glad I was to see their dear old faces! I have not been here since I was married, as you know—imagine that Harvey refused to let me come until I was a more dutiful and submissive wife!' Georgie dropt her voice at this confession; and made it with a very funny gesture.

VOL. III.

Winny laughed: 'That gives me an awful idea of marital authority,' said she. 'In fact, you are domineered over by a husband who is your lover still!'

'Don't be absurd! Harvey is indulgent enough in his man's way. I had to change my tailor for a dressmaker, and he objected to the silver buckles on my shoes. It was not much to give them up in deference to his harmless prejudice.'

'Did you exact an equivalent?' Winny asked.

'That would have been ungenerous. I tell you these things for your instruction—you, also, are a woman who loves her own way, and has it. Never, when you are married, wait for a defeat—avoid defeats by timely concessions to harmless prejudices. I do think, Winny, that some women were never meant to marry, and that I am one of them. Papa says that I use Harvey like a dog.'

'You always loved your dog, so that may not be as bad as it sounds.'

Georgie complained of missing her daily

rides in London, and of being debarred her liberty. Winny suggested that she must have advantages to balance her losses. Their former school-fellow, Miss Patrick, was named, and, in connection with her, periodical writing. Georgie's pen was laid aside, but Miss Patrick, who had gone to live in London, wished to enlist her talents in the social war for women's rights. She herself had plunged into the thickest smoke of it, and was to be heard haranguing on all its loudest and least popular cries.

'I went to her lecture on female suffrage, and she really spoke very well; she has a vein of sarcasm, more forcible, perhaps, than delicate, but it tells on a platform. Her hair is as like a bird's nest as ever, and she wears glasses. Poor soul! I daresay you heard that Mr Patrick died suddenly, and left his family destitute.'

'Yes—my mother told me. I was sorry they used to be amongst the richest people about Cotham.'

Georgie was meditative for a moment, and

then with a sudden revival of energy she asked: 'Tell me, Winny—if you were married, would you put up meekly with the confiscation of your pens, ink and paper?'

Winny considered the question for the space of a minute: 'Meekly—no,' she said at last. 'My pen finds me in pins.'

. 'I doubt whether my pen would find me in pins, and Harvey hates notoriety for women. He declares that he would as lief be racked as see me criticised in the newspapers.'

'Then don't put him to the torture. You cannot write, and escape criticism. We are differently circumstanced. If I suffer adverse criticism nobody knows and nobody cares. You would come in the way of notoriety. I don't.'

'Do you still spin your cobwebs when the dew is on the grass?'

'Don't pity me—I am not to be pitied. Youth is short, and what is there like work for helping one through long middle life? Just now my history has not to give way to anything else. I began it because, from my

mother downwards, there was not one of my friends who did not more or less despise my spinning of cobwebs.'

'My dear Winny, I would not for the world be discouraging, but authorship, as Harvey says, is one of those occupations which, if it be not very successful, is rather contemptible—at all events, in the opinion of the majority.'

Winny had made that discovery for herself. She put away the dejecting knowledge, put on a lightsome countenance, and began to say that Georgie had not told her yet whom she had met at Rockbro' in the autumn—had she met their former companion, Mildred Hutton—Mrs Frank Jarvis?

'Yes, indeed! The most absorbed and devoted of mothers—wheeling about her babies in a carriage with a fringed silk hood, her own fond, elaborate invention. And what a fine mind she had—the finest mind, for a woman, that I know.'

'She will re-emerge when her boys are older —Mildred never could give herself to more

than one duty at a time. And who else did you see?"

'Miss Craddock. She has jilted her heavy dragoon for a sprig of nobility in difficulties, who can endow her with a title to cover his bad name. And Miss Forbes—poor Maggie, still suffering agonies of toothache.'

'I should like to see Maggie Forbes again. She was always good to me. And those three were all, Georgie?'

'Yes—those were all, I think.' Winny was considering of Mr Durant, and longing yet hesitating to inquire. Georgie guessed as much, but she had nothing to tell of Mr Durant. She alluded to him, however, to gratify her loving comrade, saying in her sympathetic voice: 'How happy you were those two days at Rockbro' with the Huttons and their friends. How you danced at that ball! You enjoyed it as much as if it were wrong.'

'The only ball I was ever at in my life,' said Winny. 'Miss Craddock chaffed me—so did you. I felt it very unkind.'

- 'The first time I saw you with Mr Durant was on the cliff in the twilight, and you looked so contented that I would not disturb you; and the next morning I met you on the sands together, starting for a long walk. You came to me afterwards in St Andrew's Place; he called for you, and you were going away, forgetting your flowers, and even forgetting the civility of bidding me good-bye.'
- 'Was I so bad as that?' asked Winny, smiling half sadly.
- 'You were, indeed; I wish your little lovestory had ended better, Winny.'
- 'So do I,' Winny answered with a philosophic resignation. Then: 'Your Scotch cousin, Georgie—what news have you of him? Is he coming home?'
- 'His sisters hear, as usual. Sidney was talking of her brother to me just before we left London. No—she did not say he was returning to England. I might have asked whether he named Mr Durant, but I did not think of it. Has he ceased writing to you?'

- 'I have had no letter since that which followed me to Geneva. It is more than two years old now.'
- 'Two years? But that is an age in love and friendship! I should give him up!' cried Georgie. 'Two years, indeed!'
- 'It is a long while. I often wonder why I never hear.'
- 'I should accept the simplest solution, and say, that he does not write.'

Winny turned to her friend in a dreamy, meditative way, and replied: 'It may be so. And yet I think he would write if he had the opportunity.'

'Why cannot he avail himself of the same opportunities as the rest? John Macleod's letters are not frequent, but I never heard Sidney complain that any were lost,' Georgie said with intention and emphasis; but as Winny did not answer her she said no more. Soon after she stood up to leave. She had paid her friend a long visit. Just as she was on the point to go, she asked:

- 'When are you coming to see us in London, Winny?'
- 'Ah! I don't know,' Winny replied, looking up in her face.
- 'Well, mind you do come when you are next in London,' Georgie said. Then she inquired: 'Are you going to the Christmas music at the Town Hall to-morrow night?'
- 'No. I never go anywhere—I do not care to go alone to public places.'

It did not occur to Georgie to say: 'Come with us.' Winny had never been a visitor except to Georgie's sanctum in Mr Denham's house, and the sanctum was abolished now. Georgie kissed her, and with a promise to give her another afternoon before she left Cotham, she went away. And Winny took refuge in that blessed history.

It was not until night, when working hours were past, and she was alone in her eyrie, that Winny let her thoughts stray into musings on what Georgie had suggested as the reason why she never heard from Mr Durant. There had

been times when she could not but smile at her own persistent faith and affection. She had clung to the belief that he would not forget her, though the sharpness of recollection was sure to be worn down. Nobody had arisen to push him from his place in her heart, and in the absence of information, it was open to her to believe and imagine whatever pleased her best. She therefore ascribed to him a constancy like her own. But her life occupied her too much for sentimental grieving. Work had been first her diversion from regret, then her consolation; and now, it was almost her life itself. If Georgie had told her Mr Durant was to be at home on the morrow, she would probably not have neglected her work to-day. stood at her window gazing away over the roofs to the dim night-country, and recalled that beautiful season of her youth when Love visited her in an idle caprice. Time was weaving its inevitable veil between then and If Mr Durant had fallen weary of writing, it was not so very strange, she

## BURRS AND THISTLES—GEORGIE MARRIED. 171

said to herself. But there were tears in her eyes as she said it, and in her heart there was the dull, silent throb of an unexpected humiliation.

## CHAPTER IX.

#### IN THE COURSE OF EVENTS.

It was a memorable day on Castle Green when Winny Hesketh packed up the ponderous bulk of her great work to despatch it to the publishers. Susan folded it in many thicknesses of brown paper; the widow stood by holding the string, and giving it some final twitches to tighten it, when it was tied up. Winny directed it, and felt, oh, more glad than tongue could tell! Three years and a half had she been at it, and it was not absolutely finished yet. There were blanks to supply in Queen Anne's reign, and George III. was not complete; and though the concluding paragraph was sketched, it was not polished quite to the end. But the conclusion of the matter would be light amusement after all the burden and heat of the day. The parcel was much too big

to go by post, and so it was sent off by railway, and was duly acknowledged as having reached its destination. Her mother would have liked Winny to go at once for a change to Southmead (she had a deferred and standing invitation) but Winny would not; she would wait to hear the result of her venture first, pleading that she never could enjoy herself while in suspense. But she was not impatient. She knew that a certain number of weeks must elapse before she heard from the publishers (she gave them six) and meanwhile she took her rest and her pleasure about home; walking often to Ripley and to Holworth Grange, spending hours lacemending for Miss Baxter in the dusky drawingroom over the chemist's shop, and letting loose the suppressed rivulets of her fancy in a series of short tales which were a positive relief and delight after the drudgery, long since grown irksome, of that blessed history.

Intervals of idleness in familiar places are intensely refreshing to people who live laborious days. Winny Hesketh was too tired to care for new excitements. It was spring, it was

sweet May once more, and the flat Islands, golden with butter-cups and waving with pale cuckoo-flowers, were more delightful to her than Alpine pastures, because they were to be had with ease. Her mother found her better company than she had been for many months. She could bear to talk now, and to sit for an hour or two at needle-work without grudging the time as stolen from her real work. She even undertook to make up the net caps · with white or lilac bows which were the widow's daily wear. The first she made was not a success, and her mother remarked that she would probably have done it better if she had taken more pains. With the next she did take more pains, the utmost pains, and though it was still not what Mrs Hesketh approved, she said it would do, and Winny would improve with practice—but millinery, like everything else, was best learnt when young. Miss Dalby, the dressmaker, spent a week in the back-parlour again, and Winny sat with her, and sewed seams, and renewed and revised her wardrobe for the summer with more satisfaction in the process

than she had ever derived from her clothes before.

And thus five of the six weeks she had pledged herself to wait patiently for news from London slipped by, the only incident in their course being a letter from Dick containing a formal request for his mother's consent to his marriage with a certain young person who declined to give her own unless on an assurance that she would be received into his family with a welcome. Winny laughed till she cried over the odd thoughts Dick's letter evoked, and even Mrs Hesketh could not, speak of it without a smile. Winny was commissioned to answer it with a permission to her brother to please himself in his marriage, which she did in the happiest phraseology; for the document was to be laid before the young person's friends. But a postscript on a detached sheet carried her true sentiments, which were :-- 'Dear Dick, I am glad you are again going to be married, and I hope your wife will take care of you, and be able to amuse you well, and make a good boy of you—and if she is really nice, and you

are sure I shall like her, you may give her a kiss for me. Mother says you had better bring her down here on your wedding-holiday. We should both like a few particulars which you have omitted to give; and I am ever your loving sister, Winny;'—which may, perhaps, appear a light way for a loving sister to receive intelligence of such vast importance; but the fact was, that more than once or twice already Dick had announced matrimonial intentions. and had as often felt his heart fail him when the hour of execution drew near. Winny and his mother anticipated that he would still evade the yoke, and went through the formality required of them with the least possible anxiety as to the end. But Aunt Agnes wrote that Dick seemed fixed, at last. The young person was not very young, a widow, with an income of her own, and some influence which she had exerted to get her suitor a post in a public institution where the services were light, and the salary small but sure. Dick had been to see them in Welbeck Street, and had railed at his bondage—which for three days in the week

began- at ten A.M. and closed at four P.M., and on the other three, began at two and closed at ten P.M. His uncle, however, had counselled him to bear it, seeing that man is born to trouble, and that hardships are met with in every condition of life.

And next arrived the letter from London about the history. Mrs Hesketh watched her daughter's face across the breakfast-table as she read it. Winny coloured first, and that meant pleasure; then she knitted her brows, which might mean either perplexity or annoyance. Finally she looked up, and said: 'It is perfectly ridiculous!'

- 'What is perfectly ridiculous, Winny?' her mother asked.
- 'The way they propose to print it—in two large octavo volumes.'
- 'And what is your objection? Don't you think they are perhaps the best judges?' suggested her mother.
- 'The best judges of what my book is? No, certainly not! It is written with a view to girls. I know where the veins of their ignor-

ance run, and I have explained things that it would be absurd to explain to grown-up people, though ever so imperfectly educated. I want to have it brought out as a school-book, not as a library-book, and I want some woodcuts of buildings in illustration of the text—they lighten up a history for children, and give a rest to the eye.'

Mrs Hesketh was silent. Winny's tone and air betrayed the same petulance that had got the better of her often and often during her weariness over that work. She wrote her reply in that temper, and when her mother inquired what she had said, she replied: 'I have told them I do not like their scheme at all.'

The next letter from London entered further into particulars. It stated an opinion that the history was well done, and would not be unsuitable for a library-book; and as the cost of production would be heavy from its great length, and was to be at the publisher's risk, they reasonably claimed some consideration

for their plan. Winny pondered over it, and reluctantly agreed to it.

Then they sent her a draught of a proposal for its publication, which she knew was very fair, very liberal, indeed, but the longer she regarded it the less she liked it. She could not reconcile herself to the abandonment of the idea that had been present to her mind from the beginning to the end of her work. There was a clear specification about the size, the paper, the type, the binding; the large octavo edition was to be followed by a cheaper issue, but there was not a word of those little woodcuts she had set her heart upon.

'I have lost all confidence in it,' she said.
'It will not be at all the book I want it to be.'

She wrote, and said so. Thereupon the publishers withdrew their proposal, and begged to know whether they should send the manuscript to some other house. Winny wrote to them to send it back to Cotham. The parcel, looking much the smaller for good packing-up, was delivered at the house

on Castle Green one splendid July evening, and Susan carried it upstairs to the parlour, where Winny and her mother were resting after a walk. The sun was in the room, and Winny sat low in her wicker chair, her head laid back, and her eyes dwelling on the remote, soft glow of the sky beyond the river.

'I thought it was that blessed history,' said she smiling with quiet serenity. 'Don't bring it here, Susan—put it out of the way, on the top shelf in the linen closet.'

'Let me look at it first, Susan,' said the widow, and she looked at it as she might have looked at the face of a dead child when the coffin was about to shut it from her eyes for ever.

'Don't open it, mother, it is sure to be right,' Winny said in a deprecating tone.

Then Susan was allowed to take it away: 'All that work for nothing—for *nothing*,' sighed the widow sorrowfully.

'I don't know—it may come to good yet,' Winny, after a pause, rejoined. She had fallen into a habit of having something

cheerful to say whenever her mother became regretful.

'There does not seem to be much likelihood of it.'

'Not at present. But as it is written that "in all labour there is profit," let us live in hope that what I have gathered by the way will turn to some account by and by.'

Winny had not stirred, and now her gaze reverted to the flushed and sunny clouds. was impossible to tell from her countenance at the moment how much or how little she felt this abortive conclusion to her long labours. She had to keep a fair face for her mother's sake, but probably she had no inclination to fret over her defeated expectations. It was a disaster too great to cry over. And also, when it befell, her mind was busy with another piece of work that profoundly interested her and that was, no doubt, the chief comfort and support under her immense disappointment, because it prevented her dwelling upon it. And there was necessity, the spur that goads us all more or less, that urge her. Once or

twice in the course of her next morning's writing she lifted up her eyes dim with involuntary tears, but the pain went and came; the sense of evil and trouble was intermittent, and did not stay with her. After two days even that slight evidence of disturbance was overcome; and if her vivacity had vanished, so had her petulance—she was subdued and still, and Susan, who saw all and said nothing, was very mindful to be good to her.

The widow Hesketh did not know what to do or to say. She knew, or, at least, strongly surmised, that for a year past Winny had been spending her money that she had laid by; and now that it was certain the time had been unprofitably bestowed, and the blessed history would be totally unproductive of reward, she repented that ever she had suffered her to linger on at home, in what was turning out no better than idleness. She mentioned her repentance, and Winny replied that if her mother thought it best, she would seek another morning engagement in Cotham. The widow's visage was expressive of the discontent with which she had

ever regarded this vagrant method of earning a living; and Winny added: 'Or I will seek a situation near home—I was very well last winter. I had no cough.'

'Because at home you can take a cold in time,' said her mother. 'It is very hard to tell what would be for the best.'

It commonly happens that when we get into a strait, if we stand in it and watch, circumstances open us a way out—not the way we should have chosen, perhaps, but the way we must go. And thus it happened to Winny Hesketh.

But before the difficulty of deciding what would be for the best was solved, she finished that other piece of work on which she was engaged, and received a hundred pounds for it. There was a good deal of spending in a hundred pounds for the simple family on Castle Green, and when her mother contemplated the cheque with a satisfied and relieved expression Winny took courage to say: 'There is another year provided for.'

'I wish you would accept Mrs Frank

Jarvis's invitation now; 'the widow mentioned. 'It is beautiful weather.'

- 'Yes, it is beautiful weather. But I have no inclination to go out visiting.'
- 'That is nonsense, Winny. And it is a feeling that will grow upon you if you give way to it.'
- 'As it has grown on you, mother,' Winny shrewdly rejoined.
- 'You are young yet, Winny. When I was your age I was glad of any pleasure that offered, and refused none. After I was married the cares of life came too fast and thick to leave me any idle time to enjoy. And when the habit of keeping at home is confirmed, it is far from easy to break through. Go to Southmead, it will rest and refresh you.'
- 'I will consider of it,' Winny said. But while she was considering she received a letter from Mildred to tell her that she was just on the point of going to Rockbro' for a month, on account of the children's health.
- 'Go you to Rockbro' too, Winny,' her mother eagerly proposed.

- 'Will you go with me?' Winny asked.
- 'No—how can I?' Mrs Hesketh expected acquiescence, not an answer, but Winny said she did not see any insuperable obstacle. The widow had no intention of evading obstacles in that direction, however, and nothing Winny could urge was able to move her.
- 'I don't think it would quite do for me to go into lodgings at Rockbro' alone,' she concluded. 'And I should be so dull.'
- 'If I were no longer here you would be obliged to undertake for yourself, Winny,' her mother said.

To this Winny made a silent answer, and there the discussion ended.

When July began Cotham streets were almost emptied of the familiar figures of its well-to-do inhabitants. But one familiar face, very welcome, very acceptable to Winny, reappeared for a fortnight. Delphine Mercier that was, on a visit to her grandmother during the school-holidays, accompanied by her dear Joe and one little girl, their first contribution to the wealth

of their populous country. Delphine was stout and thriving, and Joe was much the same in appearance as he used to be, but was turning out more available for the practical purposes of life than had been expected. He was a writingmaster, and held classes at home for arithmetic and book-keeping. They were prospering in their vocation, and Delphine's dress was on a richer scale than formerly. She brought her child to the house on Castle Green with matronly pride, and did not forbear to let Winny Hesketh know she felt herself the more important personage of the two. Winny agreed with her. The widow Hesketh sat by, listening and looking on. The little girl could just toddle without the help of a guiding hand. She toddled from her mother's side across the carpet to Winny. She submitted to sit in Winny's lap, and was allowed to tug at her watch-chain and disarrange her hair.

'You don't get married, Winny,' her friend said, curiously regarding her. 'Mopsie takes to you, bless her! But, pray, don't let her tear your lace frill. She is such a mischief.'

Winny gently disengaged the little clinging fingers at her neck, and kissed them. Delphine liked her way with the child. 'I am sure you would do very well with a Mopsie of your own,' said she. 'Mrs Hesketh, why don't you persuade Winny to get married?'

The widow looked up without speaking.

Winny coloured and glanced at Delphine: 'I will be godmother to somebody else's Mopsie—that is all the child I shall ever have,' said she.

'It is early in the day to be sure of that, Winny!' cried her mother with a perceptible quiver in her voice; and she rose hastily and went out of the room.

The young people were silent for a minute, then Delphine said: 'Your mother has repented, Winny. How she used to advise us against husbands—do you remember? At one time she almost brought mamma over to her way of thinking. And now mamma is as happy as the day is long. She manages the house, and sees after the servants. We are very comfortable, indeed, and Mopsie crowns

all. Don't be so close with an old friend, Winny—I know there was somebody you cared for once. What happened?'

'Nothing happened. It is true I did care for somebody once, and I suppose I care for him still; because, though I see men as trees walking, I care for none of them,' was Winny's answer with an air of indifference.

'But if you have not had the opportunity,' Delphine insinuated.

'I don't believe that would make any difference. I should not like to think it would. Is it a pleasant part of Hull you live in? Do you know any people of the name of Rutherford or Jarvis?'

Delphine understood that the sentimental question was to be let alone. 'I know there are such people—very big people, but they are altogether out of our humble reach. We live in the town for the sake of the classes—in Prospect Row. There, Winny, she has torn your frill! I was sure she would! Mopsie, that's naughty, to pull so!'

Winny's frill had given way, at last, to the

strong baby-clutch. But Winny only kissed the little fingers again. Then her mother took Mopsie down, and presently she took her away, and Winny stood at the window, watching them cross the Green, and smiling at the developed breadth of Delphine's short figure, arrayed in brocaded silk. The kind amused smile was on her face still when Mrs Hesketh re-entered the room. She asked Winny what she was laughing at.

- 'At Delphine's consequence, and her queer figure,' was the reply.
- 'She is as broad as long, and her taste in dress does not improve,' said the widow.
- 'But her marriage is turning out better than it promised, and Mopsie is a nice little fat thing,' Winny observed.
- 'Is that a reproach to your mother, Winny?' asked Mrs Hesketh.
- 'No—I am glad of it; that is all,' and Winny looked round with eyes of mild inquiry.

The widow was very pale: 'Because if you

did reproach me, I should not wonder,' she said.

Winny's countenance broke into sunshine:
'O mother! do you think I reproach you because I have no Joe and no Mopsie?' cried she. 'Indeed, but you are mistaken! I have not forgotten your solemn warnings, but if the fates had been propitious, you might have talked till you were tired—you would have had no chance of prevailing against my love.'

- 'Have you any idea where Mr Durant is, . Winny?' her mother asked.
- 'None! I do not even know whether he is living or dead.'

At that last word Winny suddenly broke down. It was a rare thing with her, very rare, indeed, to cry above her breath, but now a passion of tears and sorrow, long pent, long accumulating, shook her from head to foot. Her mother took a handkerchief, and cast it over her face. Winny was conscious of that act, and of nothing else for a long while. When she came to herself she was alone in

the room, and it was growing dusk. She gathered the small private accessories that she was in the practice of carrying upstairs at night, and went slowly to her eyrie in the roof. Her mother was watching silently apart. She heard her step, and listened—little demonstrative of her affection as she was, the widow would cheerfully have borne any pain to save her children. When Winny was safe out of hearing Susan came to her mistress in the gloomy back parlour to which she had retreated.

'She will be better in the morning—a good cry relieves one at odd times,' the servant said for consolation.

'O Susan!' whispered her mistress, 'when the children were little, and we had put them to bed, we knew they were safe. Now we take trouble to our pillow—our night's rest is lost in grieving for them!'

### CHAPTER X.

# A JOB'S COMFORTER.

THERE was no trace on Winny Hesketh's face of the storm over-night when she came downstairs in the morning, but her mother looked sadly pale and jaded. Winny did not notice it. The widow Hesketh was never ill. Her daughter had never known her so ailing as to have her breakfast in bed. The tender, kind inquiries which prevail in sickly families were not in use between them; and as Mrs Hesketh appeared in the parlour as usual, said no word of her broken rest or of complaint in any way, Winny betook herself to her desk without any remark. It was her practice to leave off work at half past eleven, the hour when her mother preferred her walk, but this morning the air was very sultry and oppressive, and Mrs Hesketh was the first to suggest that

they should put off going out until the evening.

In the afternoon Mrs Wedge called—that most wearisome of women. Susan knew her knock, and opened the front-parlour door in passing to say: 'Miss Winny, here's Mrs Wedge! Missus is having a nap in the backroom, and I sha'n't disturb her. That good lady would talk a spider's hind leg off, and she forgets that folks have other things to do than listen.'

'Show her in here, Susan,' said Winny.
'If my mother wakes up and hears her, she will come.'

No heat, no cold, no sort of weather was a hindrance to Mrs Wedge's inveterate propensity for gadding about. She had well-earned the epithet of gospel-gossip. Circumstances had given her conversational powers a religious turn, but that was the only distinction between her and those incessant, restless social pilgrims, who spend their time in nothing else but circulating the profane news of their coterie. Winny Hesketh gave her credit for excellent intenvol. III.

tions, but her charity had not got beyond this. She tried to think her kind, but felt her so fatiguing that a very imperfect success rewarded her efforts. Mrs Wedge loved to talk only of good things, but long practice had stereotyped her fluent phrases, and her patients heard little sense in what she said. She ran on as if anything would do when couched in texts of scripture, and uttered in an urgent, pathetic voice. Since the disaster of that blessed history which the widow had unadvisedly communicated to Mrs Wedge, Winny had become a much more interesting character in that lady's sight. This great calamity made her a great opportunity. She treated of it as a divine discipline and a disguised mercy. Winny chafed under this interpretation, but she had to hear it. Mrs Wedge could no more be stopped in one of her pious discourses than a hill-stream with a fresh on Starting from the plain assumption that Winny was still an unconverted character, blind, ignorant, without spiritual experience, and altogether out of the way, she exhorted her to

seek repentance—to seek it earnestly with tears; to pray, to pray without ceasing that she might be brought to know the evil of her own heart, the misery of her condition, and that without a Saviour she was lost. She entreated her to feel, to feel deeply, the danger she was in if she neglected so great salvation. She besought her to pull off the garments spotted with the flesh, and to become as a little child in love, humility, and submission to the will of her heavenly Father. It seems a sad thing to say, perhaps, but Winny Hesketh would sigh and tire inexpressibly under such exposition. Sometimes she would answer, but that furnished another head to the sermon. Mrs Wedge never was answered. She never listened, and apparently never thought. Winny early made the discovery that she did not remember from time to time what had been said to her, nor what she had said herself. It is difficult to believe in the sincerity of an interest professed to be felt in us when our personal statements make no more mark than if they were written in water. Mrs Wedge had a fluid

mind—she would now and then apologise for her poor memory, but, in fact, she did not give her attention; she was ever so eager to speak that she was deaf, except to the swelling torrent of her own garrulity. Poor Winny always felt jaded and rather unhappy when her visits were over. On one occasion she had cried-afterwards she was very angry with herself for crying. Mrs Wedge was glad when she produced an emotional effect, but it was deceptive in Winny's case, and signified nervous depression rather than feeling. Winny thought she had behaved like a hypocrite, and the next time she was on her guard; ever since, indeed, she had been sober and collected. She had even ventured to tell Mrs Wedge that religious talk did her more harm than good, and she succeeded in repulsing the frequent kisses with which that gushing lady punctuated and eked out her pious incoherencies. No one who was unacquainted with Mrs Wedge could know what moral courage, presence of mind, and stiffness of neck were requisite to evade her kisses; but Winny Hesketh did it, and all the

more did she appear as a cold, rebellious, impenitent sinner, whose rescue would be a shining example of the power of faith.

As the visitor entered the parlour this afternoon Winny rose with placid dignity to receive her. Mrs Wedge came in with a rush as if impelled from behind by some unseen force. 'I am so sorry to hear from Susan that your dear mother is not well to-day—how is she? Have you sent for Dr Archer?' she cried in a breath, holding Winny's hands with a constraining grasp, and gazing at her with a grimace of sympathy that Winny utterly ignored.

'My mother is taking her after-dinner nap, and Susan likes her to have it undisturbed. Pray, sit down,' said she, and as Mrs Wedge acceded, she turned her own chair round from the writing-table, and composed herself for the endurance of a long visit. Winny was growing in womanly grace, and her impatience was wearing off.

'Do not neglect premonitory symptoms, my dear. At your mother's age every little symptom may be of consequence. Let me advise you to

send for Dr Archer—or else let me ask Dr Lassells to call as I pass his door.'

- 'I dare not, Mrs Wedge. My mother would not understand our taking such a liberty. She is not accustomed to summon the doctor for every finger-ache.'
- 'I have a capital prescription, then, that I will give her. It quite cured Colonel Macpherson. It is a pill—perfectly harmless if you do not require it; but most searching and effectual if'——
- 'My mother would not take a pill if you would pay her to do it—she hates physic,' Winny interrupted.
- 'But, my dear, it is necessary to apply to the remedies that God has provided,' remonstrated Mrs Wedge. 'I daresay your mother is suffering from biliousness, or, perhaps, a touch of suppressed gout.'

Winny was annoyed by this imputation. Both she and her mother had a prejudice, natural to healthy people, against being suspected of ills and infirmities which they had not. 'I don't think my mother is suffering

from anything but drowsiness—she suffers from that every day after dinner, and wakes up again quite alert towards five o'clock,' she said.

'It may be so, and I trust it is, but I have never thought her quite herself since that poor boy from Mr Fanshawe's died. And she has had other distresses since. Your failure to find a situation in the south makes her anxious for the future, and then there is the sad mortification about the history.'

'It is a pity that my mother should confide my mortifications to you, Mrs Wedge—you exaggerate them,' said Winny coldly.

'No, my dear, no,' returned Mrs Wedge, dropping her voice to the pathetic key, and shaking her head slowly—her invariable prelude to pious argument. 'I wish I could persuade you to see that they are ways God is taking to draw you to Himself. You must be convinced of your sinfulness and helplessness. You must go to Him with a broken and contrite heart, and a truly repentant spirit. You must cast yourself on His mercy, and

believe that whatever He does will work together for your good, if you truly love Him.'

'Am I in revolt against my ill-luck?' said Winny. 'Have you heard me complain? I might give you a simple reason for both those disappointments which you refer to divine visitation, but you would still take your nonnatural view of them. You are mistaken if you suppose that I distrust God. I have never had any cause to doubt His care of me. If I were in any deep trouble I do not know to whom I should cry if not to Him. My life is not nearly so difficult as you imagine. the most part I am quiet and happy enough. It seems to me that it would be ungrateful to get up a fretful mood, and it would be insincere too, for it is my instinct to strive against hardship.'

Mrs Wedge hastily interposed: 'Oh, my dear, there is a peace unto death, and you must not strive against the chastening hand of God; for whom He loveth He chasteneth. You must give yourself wholly to Him, not doing your

own will or following your own pleasure; you must be one with Him; you must go to His revealed word to tell you what to do; you must love Him with all your heart and soul and strength. He is a jealous God, and will be satisfied with nothing less. The talents He has given ought to be devoted to His service, and not to vain and unprofitable uses. Oh, that I could win you to think of it—to think of it seriously!'

Winny was grievously perplexed: 'If you would speak in the language of this world,' she said.

Mrs Wedge shook her head with a countenance full of reproval: 'The language of this world is but for an instant, so soon passes it away, and it is gone. I do not deny that fiction is more gainful than the other, but is it right? is it God's work?'

It was the old charge to which the missionary-lady returned with unabated pertinacity. Winny smiled resignedly and said: 'I have no certain means of judging whether it be God's work or not—I could not presume to say that it is. But I must wait for a conviction that it is otherwise before I throw away my best means of maintenance. My course would be very zigzag if I gave ear to all 'the irresponsible advice that is offered me. Are you not satisfied that I have lost three years in the vain pursuit of useful knowledge?'

'I am very, very sorry.' Winny knew that she was, and forgave her much on that account. At this moment Mrs Hesketh entered, erect and rested, though her cheek was rather paler than its wont. Mrs Wedge hoped that she was feeling a little better; to which the widow answered that nothing ailed her, and she glanced with a rather displeased, astonished inquiry at her daughter.

Winny's face proclaimed her not guilty of insinuations against her mother's health, and the visitor pulled out of her capacious pocket a well-bound book, which she held towards the widow, expressing a hope that Winny would read it too. Winny did not promise compliance. 'I have no doubt it is quite as much fiction as any of my stories,' said she with merry

mischief. She was always livelier in the presence of a witness, and never let Mrs Wedge triumph before her mother. 'Indeed, my stories hold a deal of truth in solution,' she went on. 'Do read one, and see.'

But Mrs Wedge would not on any plea touch a work of fiction, especially in a mustard cover; the spectacle of the hideous array in the window of the circulating library was pain and grief to her every time she passed it.

'It is unfair to condemn me unread, and a book has not come to the honour of popularity which is not bound in a mustard cover,' Winny urged. She felt rather defiant and retaliatory, like the trampled worm that turns again. She took from her mother's lap the volume that the visitor had commended to her perusal, and furled over the leaves: 'A Memoir of the Reverend Eli Dabbs, by his Daughter.' Titles and superlatives of praise and admiration arrested her eyes on every page; the reverend Eli and his friends were all perfect men, holy, evangelical, a community of saints, highly connected, and welcomed in the most aristocratic

circles. 'A choice specimen of worldly-pious, biographic fiction,' said Winny coolly, and deposited it on the side-table. 'You will like your old books better, mother.'

'Perhaps I may, Winny, but that is no reason why you should be rude to Mrs Wedge,' said her mother with severity.

Winny laughed: 'Mrs Wedge overflows with charity—she gives me plenty to bear — now I want to try her.'

'You dear child, it is impossible to be angry with you!' cried Mrs Wedge, and this time she was so quick that she clasped Winny round the neck, and kissed her before she could take measures to prevent it.

Mrs Wedge loved Winny Hesketh in spite of her sinfulness—perhaps it would not be too much to say that she loved her because of it? If Winny had been a common-place young woman, a governess earning a hard living at elementary instruction, there would have been nothing to convert her from, and Mrs Wedge would have let her alone. But she aspired to guide and rule her pen to be an instrument of good, as

she phrased it, and Winny would probably not have been pleased had she guessed what a fruitful theme of hope and gossip she was between the missionary-lady and intimate friends of her own way of thinking.

Winny was disconcerted, and her collar was disarranged by the sudden embrace. She set that straight, standing before the glass. 'Do you salute all your dear children with such impetuous holy kisses?' she said. 'Look at my nice collar—crushed.'

'It is the pink of neatness—you always are,' replied Mrs Wedge, lapsing into compliment.

Susan brought in the tea-tray, and the visitor, refreshed with a cheering cup, took her leave, and Winny and her mother went out for their evening walk down by the river.

# CHAPTER XI.

### CONSOLATORY.

MRS Wedge's words of warning to Winny Hesketh concerning her mother had not fallen on dull or deaf ears. Winny thought of them that evening as they walked by the river, and she thought of them again in the morning when they met at breakfast. Probably the widow saw something markedly observant in her eyes; for to their unspoken inquiry, she answered: 'You look at me, Winny. No, my dear, I am not quite well: I do not sleep as I could wish.'

'It is very hot weather. There is nothing to make you anxious, mother?' Winny said.

'Nothing—when you are cheerful and happy. I have done with being anxious on my own account,' was the grave reply.

'And I have not begun with it on mine,

mother. You must not lie awake thinking or fearing for me. I am satisfied to take one step at a time, and do not care to see far beyond the present day.'

Mrs Hesketh was silent. The post came to the door, and Susan brought in a letter. It was from Dick announcing his marriage as to take place on a certain day, and inviting his sister to be present at it. His mother smiled, and Winny laughed outright at the orthodox beauty of his sentiments. But she begged to be excused attendance on the ceremony.

- 'What a comfort it is to know that Dick is provided for respectably,' said she.
- 'A comfort, indeed; for he would never have provided respectably for himself,' said his mother. 'And his wife may be a friend to you, Winny, when you are left alone.'
- 'Don't talk of leaving me alone, mother,' pleaded Winny in a voice of remonstrance. 'According to the common lot you have twenty years before you yet—and I have always heard you boast of your sound constitution.'

'I have been blessed with excellent health so far; but life is very uncertain,' rejoined the widow. It was not an unusual thing for her to refer to her own removal by death, and like other references familiar but not of immediate consequence, it was apt to pass without leaving much impression. But after this occasion Winny consulted Susan whether anything was really the matter.

'I daren't pretend to say there is or there is not, Miss Winny,' Susan answered cautiously. 'But a biscuit and glass of port-wine at eleven o'clock in the morning before her walk is what missis likes. She has been trying to do without, and that's told on her.'

'O Susan! why did you not speak to me, that I might see she had it? You ought always to speak to me now!' cried Winny with sudden self-reproach.

'I will for the time to come. Missis is not well pleased if she fancies she's looked after, but she ought not to be let do just quite as she likes altogether. I warned her it would not do to drop her wine, and she said, where was the money to come from?'

Winny ordered in a dozen of excellent portwine, and her mother drank it at the hours she preferred without making any troublesome objections. Winny said to her: 'When I was little, I believed you were made of money, and expected you to give me whatever I wanted. Now you are to believe that I am made of money, and you are to look to me for whatever you want. When that dozen is done there is more where it came from.'

'Forty-eight shillings is enough to give, Winny—I am afraid you gave more for this,' said her mother.

'Forty-eight shillings is what I did give. The clerk at Newlands told me he would send the wine you were accustomed to have.'

'That was right. I have always found Newland's clerk civil and obliging—never change a tradesman without a sufficient reason; you are better served so. But you must not be extravagant. I remember that YOL, III.

when first you had money of your own, you insisted on setting some aside to play with.'

'Oh, I have given that up. It is no longer a strange delight to have money of my own. Every shilling has its use, but I think my purse is like the widow's cruse—if it never runs over, neither is it ever quite dry.'

'But that is a blessing the psalmist prayed for, Winny—the blessing of a lot encumbered with neither riches nor poverty,' said her mother. She derived much satisfaction from Winny's words spoken without forethought. Her life had come almost to reflect her daughter's. As she saw Winny glad or sorry, so was she glad or sorry. But there was a failure in her strength which neither port-wine nor peace of mind seemed successful in resisting. Winny and Susan became more conscious of it, and Nanny Anson spoke to her nursling.

'You ar'n't a child now, my joy, and it is no use shutting your eyes, and making believe it's all right with your mother; for it is not all right. If Dr Archer's past trusting, I'd get

the missis to see Dr Lassells,' urged the old woman.

'You ask her, Nanny—I dare not,' Winny whispered, faltering. 'She would not for me. And, Nanny, you will come and stay if we want you? You will not leave me to myself?'

'That I won't, my joy,' Nanny said, and laying her wrinkled hand for a moment on Winny's bowed head, she went out.

Mrs Hesketh objected, in the first instance, to send for Dr Lassells. She thought it quite unnecessary. Winny was only too thankful to believe that she knew best. But one day Mr Caleb called, and a change must have struck him, for he said he was afraid she had been ill. No, she replied, she had been much as usual. He had come to talk to Winny, and to invite her to a reception at his house at the corner of the Green. His wife was pleased to call a general meeting of their friends and acquaintances before going to the sea. They had spent the winter and the spring to the middle of June in London, and after only a month of

dulness in Cotham, Mrs Caleb, who had seen no society at all before she married, found herself in urgent need of the salt-breezes and gaieties of Rockbro'. Her husband had nothing more important to do than to oblige her—she was a very fortunate woman as an old man's darling.

It was Winny's sincere desire to excuse herself from attending the reception, but Mr Caleb pooh-poohed her excuses, and her mother spoke up: 'My dear Winny, why should you not go? I wish you to go. Do not refuse everybody's kindness.'

'It is nothing formal—come in at eight o'clock. If it be a fine, warm evening, we shall be in the garden. You will meet only the people you know—the Cotham people,' said the painter.

Thus urged, Winny let herself be prevailed on to accept the invitation—with a by-thought of how the Cotham people, though she knew them all by sight from a child, were much more of strangers to her than Mr Caleb supposed. The artist then began to inquire of her literary

ventures, and the widow would not be restrained from telling him the dismal tale of the history. Something in it touched his sense of the ridiculous. He hardly tried to keep a grave countenance, and greeted the conclusion with an uproarious peal of laughter. By that time Winny's eyes had brightened, and her lips had relaxed with sympathetic fun.

'Confess, now, that it was rather a relief to you?' cried the artist—'to get off correcting the proofs, verifying the dates and all that sort of thing. I'll tell you a little story.'

This little story was of how, when he was an ardent young enthusiast, he had set about a grand ideal picture that was to lift him, at once, into the ranks of the immortals. It was a scene in Fairy-land, with a hundred and seventy-three figures. By day, he laboured and toiled at it, by night he dreamed of it—and of the honour, glory, and money it was to bring him. It stood on the easel for months, for years—all his comrades knew it, and hated it. His devotion to it was interrupted only by the often-recurring necessity of producing a pot-boiler,

but for a long while he returned to it after each break with strength refreshed and hopes exalted. Meanwhile, he gathered experience and skill; he began to weary of his fantastic rabble-rout, then stole in a secret disgust of it, but still he could not justify to himself the loss of so much painstaking work. It became a nightmare to him. He got up to be early at it. He sat up late. At last he took to candle-There was one incident that he had painted and scraped, and painted and scraped again, until there was a hole in the canvas. He would cut it clean out. It was night when he devised this thorough measure. He went to execute it with feverish, impetuous haste, and a candle in his hand. A bit of candlesnuff fell, and lo! a blaze, a conflagration! Swift, the whole was consumed, and he was rid of an incubus !—As the old man told his story, he dramatised it with play of feature, with vehement gesture—even Mrs Hesketh herself smiled, and as he got up and went away at the climax, she and Winny were left in good

humour to contemplate the wrong side of a misfortune.

'Still, I cannot imagine that blessed history will ever become the subject of a jest to you,' said the widow, relapsing into mournful earnest.

Winny preserved her cheerfulness. 'It is impossible to predict,' said she. 'I was vastly relieved to be quit of it when it went to London. I know that Queen Anne's reign wanted a deal of filling in, and so does the present reign. If it had been published, and had turned out a loss, that would have vexed me far worse than the sight of it does, aloft in the linen-closet. But let us have done talking about it—talking will not alter the matter, and I think I am almost resigned.'

# CHAPTER XII.

### A RECEPTION ON CASTLE GREEN.

Winny Hesketh was amused, but she was pleased too, by the evident pleasure that her mother took in anticipating for her the reception at Mr Caleb's. It was true that she had never been to a party in Cotham, and from the curious interest the widow expressed in the event it might have been fraught with consequences much more momentous than Winny could at all persuade herself that it was likely to be.

'Remember, I am not a lovely young lady, going to her first ball, mother,' she said, when required to show what she intended to wear on the occasion.

Mrs Hesketh could not but feel chagrined. 'You are too indifferent, Winny,' said she.

'Well then, mother, I shall wear that silvergrey chamberry gauze I bought to go to London with three years ago. It has only been twice on. Mrs Caleb will know it again, but I don't mind that.'

'It was elegant at the time, but it was a dinner-dress, and this is an evening-party. You look very nice in short sleeves, have you nothing with short sleeves, Winny?'

'Nothing that I like so well as the grey gauze, or that I should feel so comfortable in.'

'My dear Winny, I cannot have you look particular. Come upstairs, and let me see what you have; and I will decide for you.'

Mrs Hesketh spoke with so much decision that there was nothing for Winny to do but obey, and pass her wardrobe in review before the experienced taste of her mother. She had even to spend an hour in her petticoats, putting on and pulling off one dress after another until a successful compromise was effected by the shortening of the gauze sleeves, and the substitution of delicate old Mechlin lace where the trimming was of quilled satin ribbon. Before

the parade was finished Winny was heartily tired of it.

'I will buy a pair of new gloves; my bronze kid slippers will do—nobody will look at me twice. I am sure, mother, you must be satisfied now,' she said, perhaps a little too impatiently.

'You mean that I ought to be satisfied, Winny. But I am not,' was the widow's rejoinder. 'Why cannot you let your mother enjoy the pleasure of seeing you look to advantage? It is not much of it that she has enjoyed yet. And I have always understood that it was a part of a woman's duty to appear nice.'

Winny glanced at her mother with rueful, laughing perplexity. 'It is too late to appeal to my vanity now, mother,' said she. 'I begin to grow an old woman. You should have told me that half-a-dozen years ago.'

'You grow a very old woman, indeed. You will be twenty-five next birthday, if you live. And you consider that too old to appear pleasing?—I gave you credit for more judgment.

Half-a-dozen years ago you were a rosycheeked little girl, but you are much prettier now—and you ought to know it.'

'One needs occasionally reminding — I am delighted to hear you say so, mother. I shall dress an hour too soon to-morrow evening for the comfort of sitting to be approved by you. The flattery is so sweet that I feel as if I might even yet adapt myself gracefully to caresses and praises.' Winny spoke with a demure sarcasm that reproached her mother though she did not intend it. Certainly it had never been her way to indulge her daughter with caresses and praises—rather the reverse, in fact; until Winny had become inured to the belief that she was not liable to attract them, while womanly-conscious enough to be very far from despising them.

Winny did as she promised on the evening of Mrs Caleb's party, and went to dress a full hour too early. Very soon her mother followed her, and came knocking at her door. Winny let her in, and gave her a seat to look on. The widow found a pathetic gratification in the indulgence that she had never claimed before, and Winny, touched by the absurd humour of it, made the process as tediously interesting as she was able. Her mother had eyes for everything—for a trace of sunburn on her neck, for a brown mole on the whiteness of her arm, which she informed Winny she was born with. Winny said, yes, she had once tried to make it go away by rubbing it with a juicy apple every morning, which she had read of as a cure for warts.

'How could you be so silly? Let me see it,' and when Winny brought her arm near for inspection, her mother pressed the blemish with her finger softly, stroked her hand and turned it over, saying, it was like her grandmother Hesketh's—till Winny was fain to think as much tenderness had been suppressed in her mother as seemed likely to go undeveloped in herself. It was a true reflection, and saddened her for the moment.

Eight o'clock struck before, allowing for rests and pauses, Winny was ready to go to the reception. She had no flower or other ornament n her hair, which Susan remarked was wanted to give her a finish. But her hair was beautiful, and might do without adorning, her mother said: and with that commendation and a kiss—a rare bounty for the time of day—she went off alone along the pavement to the corner of the Green, Susan watching her from their own doorstep until she disappeared under Mr Caleb's portico.

It was a warm, breezeless evening, and Winny was ushered from the hall straight through the large, low drawing-room upon the terrace where the artist and his wife were reposing after dinner, and awaiting their guests. Somebody must arrive first on these occasions, and Winny was the first arrival—not to her sorrow; for Mrs Caleb greeted her with a frank recognition of her old dress.

'Don't mention it,' said Winny laughing.
'Consider that I have to spin my own clothes.
And ask your husband to tell you some tale of the days when he painted pot-boilers, and one dress-suit had to last him as many years as mine has lasted me.'

Mrs Caleb was vanquished. 'I am sure,' said she, 'nothing new could become you more charmingly.' She took a spray of fern and a red rose from a china basket, and fixed them in Winny's hair, and another rose in her waistband. 'There, now you are perfect. You only want somebody to look after you, and give you just the loving final touches.'

'You are a goose, my dear,' said the old artist; but he was pleased by his young wife's kindness too.

Presently the company came flowing in. There was a spacious square of grass, with trees and shrubs and a high wall round it at the back of Mr Caleb's house. It was called a garden, but the flowers were all imported in rustic baskets. A wide, tile-paved walk below the windows was dignified with the name of terrace, furnished with cushioned benches and lighted with gas disguised by flower-shaped, coloured glasses. Here most of the visitors assembled, and Winny Hesketh found the scene both pretty and amusing.

She had a greeting from Mr Cave, the draw-

ing-master, who told her she wore well, better than most people, he thought; and from Mr Anderson, the music-master, who had, at last, taken to him a wife, and begged to introduce her to Miss Hesketh. Mr Denham, with his grey hair brushed up like a cock's comb, was as cordial as an old acquaintance, and Mrs Denham spoke of Georgie as coming into Northshire soon, to go to Rockbro' with her own family. Dr and Mrs Lassells were there. Mrs Lassells, fat, fair and comely as ever, with a numerous nursery at home; and Miss Craddock, chaperoned by her married friend, Miss Craddock still, and still overflowing with the boisterous confidence which the possession of money infuses into certain minds.

- 'And how has the world used you, Miss Winifred, since last I saw you?' was the heiress's brisk opening query.
- 'I will allow you to judge from appearances,' was Winny's answer.
- 'Well enough, on the whole, I should guess. But you are not married yet?'

- 'No more are you—and with less excuse for being still a spinster. How is it?'
  - 'I cannot tell how it is, but so it is!'
- 'Where is the heavy dragoon that I saw? Where is the wild slip of nobility that I heard of?' asked Winny, mocking.
- 'Echo answers: "Where?" Gone to the limbo where departed lovers go! The heavy dragoon is at Cork, I believe; the wild slip of nobility is wherever rogues of quality most do congregate, we may be very sure.'
- 'She has too many suitors,' Mrs Lassells interposed in the serious tone. 'She cannot keep her fancy fixed long enough to name the happy day. I tell her that if she goes on jilting men right and left for another seven years, she will end as an old maid.'
- 'That fate has no terrors for me. An old maid of fortune is always estimable. Poor girls ought not to wait on promotion longer than they can help. Let me advise you to get married, Miss Winifred.'

Mrs Lassells turned her mild eyes on the face and figure of her former schoolfellow, and was good enough to say: 'Yes, why not? You were always nice, Miss Winifred. Are you so much given up to books and learning that you despise such material duties as house-keeping and nursing babies? You must not let your immortal productions absorb your great mind altogether.'

'Of the immortality of my productions the less expected the better; of the immortality of yours there can be no sort of doubt,' retorted Winny with a merry countenance. 'I never meet your nurses, with their perambulators full of splendid children, without saying to myself that pretty Miss Otley has done her duty most handsomely in the station of life to which it has pleased God to call her—that she is, indeed, a worthy specimen of the British matron.'

Mrs Lassells laughed, and was pleased, if confused, by Winny's commendation: 'That is very good-natured of you, Miss Winifred, and you shall not be chaffed any more by me. You know that I am no reader, but I did get through that first book of yours, and I liked it very much. And Dr Lassells read it too. If you you iii.

will come and see me some morning I will show you my children.'

Dr Lassells overheard his own name, and joined the group. Miss Craddock moved away. and he took her place. Winny did not remember that he had ever spoken to her before; she had seen him pass in and out of her mother's house during the time when he was attending the three boys in scarlet fever there, but they had never come in contact. He addressed her with an inquiry after her mother's health, to which Winny answered that she feared it was less good than it used to be. The gentleman glanced quickly and scrutinisingly in her face. Winny had a cultivated voice, a pleasant accent; her associations during her most impressible years had lain chiefly amongst cultivated people, and her intelligence and quick ear had helped her to acquire their tone. In the native sets of Cotham, wealthy and exclusive as they might be, the provincial twang prevailed strongly. Dr Lassells appreciated purity of speech—he had often tried to moderate his good wife's loud and broad fluency, but to no purpose.

It was their one quarrel: she would not try to improve.

'Your mother does not save herself so much, perhaps, as it is advisable to do at her age,' he said in a friendly, reserved manner, from which the superiority of patronage was now eliminated.

'My mother never did save herself at any age. She was always too ready to help her medical friends in a difficulty, and wore herself out for small thanks often,' Winny replied.

'I have a tedious case out at Broughton that I should like to bring into the town, if Mrs Hesketh could have taken the charge. I was proposing yesterday to call and ask her.'

Winny shook her head. 'I must beg you will not—I am afraid she might accept it,' said she.

'When she has had invalids to nurse as well as lodge she ought to have been better paid, and it was often rather the reverse—patients who move into the town to be near the doctor, are mostly poor patients. Her house was a great convenience to us. She began it herself

with Mr Nicholls—she behaved divinely to poor Nicholls; for he had nothing, literally nothing for months before he died. She will not lose her reward though she may not find it here—but then, how much more noble and useful a life than that of your rich old maids, wholly given up to making themselves comfortable.'

Winny was touched and gratified by this kind appreciation of her mother. She inquired after Dr Archer.

'Archer is at the end of his tether,' was Dr Lassells' reply. Then after a pause, he said: 'I will call upon your mother as a friend, Miss Hesketh, to-morrow'—and having said it, he caught Mr Denham's arm as he was passing, and moved off.

Mrs Brunton next approached her former half-boarder with a stately importance not without good-nature. 'So you are here, Miss Winifred; the first time I have seen your face in Cotham society,' said the school-mistress. 'Very good of Mrs Caleb to invite you, I'm sure. And how do you do?'

Winny was glad to say that she was very well, she thanked Mrs Brunton. They did not find much else to say to each other. 'I read a laudatory notice on your last book in the Athenæum. I have no doubt that it was well deserved, but I have understood that it is easy to get that sort of thing done without any merit at all,' said the elder lady. She had a prejudice against actors and authors, dancers and similar characters. She remembered that Miss Winifred had manifested resolute, odd humours in her school-days, and, perhaps, it was not to be wondered at that she had taken to authorship. Mrs Lassells was the prize-pupil from the Manor School to point to in Cotham. Patrick was a cruel injury—almost a disgrace. 'We never mention her—a young woman who comes forward on a public platform to harangue a miscellaneous assemblage is a reflection on the modesty of the sex,' said the school-mistress with calm severity.

There was a little music and singing, and cakes, ices, and sandwiches were handed about for the refreshment of the guests who, by

eleven o'clock, had all dispersed. Winny Hesketh left with the earliest, alone, as she had come, and walked home in a mood of perfect serenity. Nothing had she seen, heard, or said to disturb the even current of her days. If this was society in Cotham she felt herself on a level with its very modest requirements. Susan had expected to see her a little flushed, excited, exuberant, but her first words on entering the parlour were: 'Is my mother gone to bed?'

'Yes, Miss Winny, I persuaded her to go, and not sit up for you,' Susan answered. 'She went into the garden when you were gone, and walked up and down—there is nothing to alarm you, Miss Winny, but she caught her foot and stumbled, and got a fall on the gravel. I think she turned dizzy, maybe, but she says no. She's none the worse, however, letting alone a graze on the fore-part of her wrist that a sixpence would cover.'

While Susan talked she lighted a candle for her young mistress, who took it, and went straight to her mother's room. The widow was awake. She had not closed her eyes yet, and she was rather eager to give an account of how she had tripped against a stone, and fallen. 'Susan fancies I was giddy in my head, but it was not so,' she said. 'And now tell me how you have enjoyed your evening?'

Winny stated that she had enjoyed it more than she anticipated; and then she gave a brief account of who was there, and what the ladies wore, and how the garden was lighted; from which combination Mrs Hesketh received an impression of a delightful and graceful entertainment, which had served to introduce her daughter creditably, though late, into the best society of Cotham.

Winny slept none the worse for its delightsomeness, but she was not sensible of any ardent desire to assist at a repetition of it. Society, like most things else, needs a certain use and custom to be necessary to us; and Winny had lived so late and long outside its limits that she found it impossible to care much for it. Her indifference was probably not past correction if circumstances should call for its correction; and meanwhile, it cushioned her against the envies and emulations which an abortive striving for a footing in society acutely mortifies; and she was not aware of all she lost.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### LIFE IN THE BALANCE.

DR LASSELLS called at the house on Castle Green in the morning, and saw Mrs Hesketh In the latter part of the day Dr Archer came tottering to the door on a pair of sad spindle-shanks, and with a flabby face the colour of death. Winny saw him from the parlour-window, and ran herself to let him in. The physician was a very picture of pity to her -of pity and wonder too, that a man who knew the way he was going, and the end of that way, should be thus deliberately killing himself with drink. He said that he had come to inquire for his old friend, having heard from Lassells that she was not well. Winny took him to her, and at a gesture of dismissal she left them together. But she watched for his going away again, and

intercepted him to ask what she could do for her mother.

'Nothing,' was his answer, gazing dully on the ground. 'Let her do as she likes, and don't alarm yourself.' He stood a minute in the same attitude, and with the same gaze of half stupor, and then he said good-day to Winny, and left the house. It was the last time she saw him.

Mrs Hesketh made no sign of having heard any news about herself. She maintained her placid demeanour, she took her morning walks, she went to church as she had always done. But now and then a sad, plaintive abstraction came over her countenance, and a perceptible decline of spirits gradually lessened her desire for daily exercise. There was no visit to Holworth Grange that summer. Miss Baxter often dropt in of an evening, the longest friend in Cotham the widow had. In the middle of August there was a week of intensely sultry, damp weather. Mrs Hesketh was much weaker at the close of it than at the beginning. She was languid and lethargic; she did not go to church the next Sunday, and in the evening she expressed a wish to see Dick who was at Rockbro' with his new wife. She complained of an acute pain in her head, grew feverish, and wandered in her talk. She did not recollect Winny, and addressed her as 'Sister Alice,' but the thread of memory was only tangled, not broken yet; for when Dick appeared she addressed him as Dick, with various reminders of his duty which Dick used to need—and, perhaps, needed still.

Dr Lassells was grave but not apprehensive. Dick came out of his mother's room crying—her children had never seen the widow Hesketh lying helpless on a sick bed before, and they were more timorous for her than others. Dick did not cry long. He talked to his sister in a subdued voice, but he talked of many things—he recalled the provoking, idle boy he had been, and laughed at himself indulgently. Why not? His mother had scolded him then as a matter of course, and had forgiven and forgotten his vexatious freaks years and years ago.

'She is thankful I am married, Winny,' he said with much complaisance.

'Yes, it is a real comfort to her that you are prudently married,' Winny replied, her thoughts straying far from Dick's prudence, though the outward and visible signs of it were thick upon him.

'Aunt Agnes allows that I have made a hit,' said he. 'And so I have. My old woman is a good one in her way; we bowl along capitally.' Winny glanced at her brother perplexed—she did not perceive on the instant that Dick's old woman was his lately married wife. 'She would have come to help you in nursing mother, but I fancied you would like the house to yourself, and would get on best alone; but you do look jaded, Winny, and very pale for you,' he remarked considerately.

'I shall take no harm,' Winny answered.
'My mother is not fond of strangers. We have Susan, and Nanny Anson is coming on Saturday to stay. I hope we shall make your

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good old woman's acquaintance soon, but not just now.'

Dick went back to Rockbro'. Winny had put other matters on one side, and was wholly devoted to her mother who would not willingly lose sight of her. The widow Hesketh was very silent and composed during these days when her life seemed to tremble in the balance. A glance, a smile served her often instead of speech. She was up every day and sat in the drawing-room again; she was reluctant to be absent from church on Sunday, and mentioned it apologetically to Mrs Wedge. Mrs Wedge suggested that the parish clergyman ought to visit her, since she could not attend church. and Winny asked if she must send for him. On Monday, however, before she sent, the curate called—a homely good man who said to her: 'No, Miss Hesketh, you are not uncared for. When we missed your mother from her place in church yesterday for the second time, the rector was sure she must be ill, and bade me inquire. He will call upon her himself if she wishes it."

Mrs Hesketh was satisfied to see only the curate. Though a stranger to both the widow and her daughter, except in his public ministrations, he was accustomed to plain, homely, old-fashioned people whose rule of religious conduct is the church-catechism, and regular attendance on the church-services of their parish, and his visits were acceptable to them both.

In the hushed monotony of the house during this period the days in their passing seemed almost endless to Winny. Her mother would watch her from her chair or her pillow, speaking, now and then, but more frequently expressing her love and gratefulness by kind looks only. Winny kept a quiet face, reading by her or sewing; for even now, unless at dusk, her mother did not like to see her doing nothing. She was mindful that Winny went out of doors daily to take a walk, which she ascertained by requiring her to appear in her bonnet, both going and returning. Winny did everything she could to please her, and though Dr Lassells was not so positively sanguine as the elder

physician who had known the widow for so many years, he said her tranquillity was in her favour—no one ever lay so still who was in pain of body or trouble of mind. This assurance was an exceeding comfort to Winny, and if she had sometimes long thoughts of the vague future she was careful to hide them—why vex any more the good mother who might-soon have done with vexations for ever?

But it was inevitable that while life lasted anxiety should linger hard by it—anxiety having been once very much the widow's habit. It recurred most sharply when her mind was astray. One evening her eyes had an expression of distressed and wistful melancholy, but she said nothing until Winny asked: 'What is it, mother?' Then with a tremulous mouth, she answered: 'I was thinking of what I shall do when you leave me—you go to your new situation next week, I suppose?'

'Oh no, mother, I have no new situa-

tion to go to,' said Winny, eager to reassure her.

'I am very sorry to hear it. You have been seeking one a long while now,' was the rejoinder in a saddened tone.

Winny had some difficulty in explaining that she was contented to be where she was, and desired no change: 'I shall certainly not leave home while you need me. One thing at a time suffices me now, and since you are ailing my one thing is to stay, and take care of you.'

'You are very good, Winny, but if a desirable situation offered I should not wish you to lose it on my account. It would be a pity to throw away an opportunity. I shall soon be about again, I hope, and able to spare you.'

'I will not throw away an opportunity, mother. But, meanwhile, I am not tired of playing at patience. There is always my pen, you know. I shall not starve.' Winny spoke cheerfully, humouring her mother's wandering thoughts with tears in her eyes.

'No one need starve who is willing to work. But do not depend on your pen—better take to your needle.' The assurance that Winny was not obliged to leave her had, however, arrested the widow's attention. She grew composed again, spoke of Dick and his wife, and the easy position she had procured him, and was restored to her usual serenity.

Another time her anxiety was for Winny's future solitariness: that she would have nobody belonging to her for a friend when her mother was gone. Winny endeavoured to laugh this fancy away.

'For a single woman to be solitary is such a common lot that I cannot begin to deplore it,' said she.

'Dick is not to rely on, and his wife is attached to her own family, of course. The Rutherfords have never taken any notice of you. It is not kind; for, if you think of it, sister Bessie had a home with me until she married.'

Winny scarcely knew what to answer to this regret, a not unnatural regret. At last she said: 'There is Aunt Agnes always. Oh, I shall never be left quite alone, don't fear it! Listen to this—it is a scrap that I must have you. III.

heard or read somewhere, though I do not remember where.' Winny had in her hand a shabby Russia leather note-book in which a dried leaf or flower kept special places, here and there. The earliest notes were written in print-hand which she affected as a child—this note which she read for her mother's consolation was later.

'We, through God's mercy, whether we be young or old, whether we have many friends or few, if we be Christ's, shall all along our pilgrimage find those in whom we may live, who will love us, and whom we may love; who will aid us and help us forward, and comfort us, and close our eyes. For this love is a secret gift, which, unseen by the world, binds together those in whom it lives, and makes them love and sympathise in one another.'

'Those are beautiful words, Winny, and true' words. I have trusted in God, and have never yet wanted a friend to help me,' said the widow.

'You have been enabled to trust for yourself—trust for me too, mother—why not?' Winny answered.

'You have not been fortunate. Nothing has gone well with you. I don't know how it is; for you seem very industrious. You must begin to save, and lay by all you can, when you get another situation. It is a bitter thing to come to want in one's old age, Winny.'

The colour flushed warmly in Winny's cheeks, and her voice trembled as she spoke in expostulation: 'O mother! I cannot look so far forward—and I would not if I could. Listen here again (reading from the note book): "It is a vain thing and unprofitable, to be either disturbed or pleased about future things, which, perhaps, will never come to pass. What else doth anxiety about future contingencies bring thee, but sorrow upon sorrow?"'

'I hope God will take care of you. Your young companions are all married and gone away. By and by the old companions will drop off and die—Mrs Wedge is a good woman, Winny—do not be so impatient of her discourses.'

'Dear mother, she is silly often, and tiresome almost always, but I will try to behave better.

Shall she come upstairs when she calls to-day to inquire? She begs to come.'

Mrs Hesketh ruminated gravely, and said she did not rest so well after much conversation—and kind Mrs Wedge never knew when to have done. Winny proposed to bid the missionary-lady come on Sunday evening, when Miss Baxter was to come, and the curate to read prayers and administer the sacrament. To this her mother bowed her head in acquiescence, and appeared satisfied.

The widow Hesketh's bedroom window overlooked the summer-show of their neighbour's garden — a confined spot, but so constantly tended that it could not but respond with abundant flowery beauty. That Sunday evening she admired its beauty, and remarked that the jessamine on the high wall would soon be out. Perhaps the exertion and excitement of the occasion were too much for her; she had a relapse that night, and the fever ran high. For the two days succeeding she lay seemingly conscious, but silent—so far away, so alone in her weakness, that Winny felt as if the words and

cares of human love were powerless to reach her any more. The peace of her face was all the answer she could give to the watchers by her bed. Faithful, untiring watchers they were. Dr Lassells whispered that much rested with them. There was a rally.

'While there is life, there is hope,' said Nanny Anson again and again during many anxious hours.

Then there came a blessed sinking into slumber. It was about ten o'clock on a beautiful sunny morning when hope revived, and Winny recognised, with joyful thanksgiving, that her mother was to be spared to them. She opened her eyes with a smile, and said audibly: 'Have I been asleep?'

A few days after Winny entered her room with a letter in her hand. It was from Dick, proposing to bring his wife to Cotham before they left Northshire. His mother said, let him bring her, by all means, and was evidently gratified by the proposal. This new interest was coincident with the renewal of her strength.

'I have no fear now but your mother will live to a good old age, my joy,' Nanny said to her nursling. 'Keep up your heart. I expect she'll be better after this bout than she has been for a long while. It has been hanging over her ever since she took on so when that poor boy from Mr Fanshawe's died.'

Winny needed no bidding to keep up her heart: it was enough, for the present, that her mother had got the turn to health again.

Nanny looked further on, and with much cheerful prevision: 'If,' said she, 'Master Dick's wife should happen to be what the mistress approves, and should come to have a family, it will be such a pride and pleasure as will make her quite young again.'

Winny brightened, blushed, almost sparkled at this view—it had not occurred to her. 'Yes, Nanny—and I should like to have some little nephews and nieces,' cried she. Then with a sigh and a rueful look: 'I should not wonder if my mother were happier in Dick's children than ever she has been in her own. I have disappointed her, I know.'

Nanny shook her head, and answered with soothing philosophy: 'Your mother don't see things just exactly always in the same light as other folks, my joy; but, as I have telled her often when she has been fretted about you, you've done your best—and if some has done better, and been luckier, it's God's will that so it should be. He don't prosper us all alike—and we have no call to complain whatever. He does.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

## SUPERSEDED.

MRS HESKETH had not left her room when Dick and his wife arrived from Rockbro', but she was impatient to do so, and on the day following she did migrate to the old drawing-room in the evening, when the sun got round to that side of the house. Already Dick's wife was settled in the bay-window, with her neat red-silk-lined work-basket on a small table at her elbow, and she furnished it very becomingly. It looked the more attractive for being inhabited by several figures.

Her name was Eliza, and Winny and her mother agreed that they had never been more pleasantly surprised than by the appearance and manners of the admirable person who had taken compassion on Dick's lonely bachelorhood. She was a pretty woman, and had a

great deal of character; was, in fact, just the woman to make the best of a rather weak and self-indulgent husband some years younger than herself. Dick's luck was certainly in the ascendant when he met her. She was extremely good-natured, and had an extremely good and well-grounded opinion of herself. She had been long esteemed a superior woman, and was not aware of any flaw in her temper or any defect in her judgment. She might be mistaken occasionally, for she was mortal, and therefore liable to err: but she never knowingly did wrong in her life-a modest statement which she mentioned without reserve. Winny, conscious of frailties and infirmities. speculated whether Eliza's independent income was any source of her merits and her beautiful complacency-Mons. La Bruyère would have answered, 'Yes;' but with visitors in the house Winny was too busy to find leisure for appeals to her books, and was even glad to dispense with their company.

She was feeling very happy just then in her quiet way. Her mother's recovery

made a background of satisfaction to her daily life. And Dick was kind and brotherly -a softening medium for his wife's perfections. Winny had by this time achieved a moderate skill in many household duties, and Susan, with whom she was ever a favourite, extolled her as equal to all. She could superintend a roast joint and compound a variety of puddings; she could make gruel and beef tea, the staple of her mother's present diet, and was quite willing that her cleverness should be left in the shade. Perhaps she discerned early in their acquaintance that other people's cleverness was not interesting to Eliza. Dick, who had never looked upon his sister as a useful member, liked to surprise her at the kitchen-table in a white-bibbed apron that wrapped the skirt of her dress all round, and to announce in the parlour that the result of her labours was capital. Winny was not too proud to be pleased by his praises, and her mother admitted, in her dispassionate tone, that Winny did well enough when she took pains, and was not in a hurry-nothing good

could be done in a hurry—and Eliza always smiled with benevolent acquiescence. was an accomplished cook. It did not trouble her though she found no time to open a book from Sunday to Sunday, but her experience in domestic concerns was wide and varied. Winny appeared to her a very simple little person. Eliza had been brought up in the midst of abundance and of a large family; she had seen her brothers and sisters married; had nursed her father and mother gently out of the world, and had performed the same kind service for an aged uncle, to whose gratitude she was indebted for her comfortable fortune. This uncle had been a famous chess-player, and in his failing health Dick Hesketh had played many a game with him-this was how he and Eliza became intimate. Dick made no secret of his need of somebody to take care of him. Eliza had been taking care of somebody all her life, and was not averse to discovering her final vocation in taking care of him. She did it thoroughly—so thoroughly that Winny wondered how he relished being managed so much. And even while she wondered, the same management was being imperceptibly extended to herself, to her mother, to Susan, to the whole house, and everything in it.

How it all happened was not difficult to see when it was done, but the first beginnings were unnoticed, and the gradual progress was obscured by various causes. The end, however, was that Winny was superseded at home. She had never been suspicious or jealous of interference; she was easily set aside by an amiable, authoritative voice. Whether the beeftea was the preliminary step, or the incursion into the linen-closet, she conjectured and considered when it was too late, but at the time she let Eliza do without an after thought. 'Great events from trivial sources spring'and the sources were surely trivial enough that gave rise to the next great event of Winny Hesketh's life-her 'not much of a life,' as her friend Georgie had once called it.

Dr Archer himself had verbally instructed

Winny in the making of beef-tea, and she had adhered to his instructions with implicit obedience and unvarying success. Eliza had another way which she averred was better, and being permitted to try it, and Mrs Hesketh having said that she did not taste much difference, she took that task upon her with the lively remark that two cooks were not needed to make sick-broth. Then came the affair of the linen-closet. Eliza made quick work with her needle, and was one day much in want of something to do. She suggested that in such an old house there must be linen in disrepair, and the widow gave her the key of the closet in Winny's absence, to go and look. She rummaged and routed all over, and found sheets that would wear years yet, if turned sides to middle, and table-cloths that a little fine darning would keep going for ever so long. And she found that blessed history. She ought to have let that alone, for there was the publisher's label on it; but she fancied it might be towels or table-napkins, of which there was a deficiency, and in that expectation she opened the parcel,

and discovered the laborious manuscript. All that writing was a wonder to her, and before Winny came in she had heard the sad story of it from her mother.

There are people to whom a failure ought The immaculate Eliza never to be confessed. was one of them. Any failure was contemptible in her sight, and such a failure as this was contemptible indeed, because of its far-reaching ambition. When Winny returned, dressed as she always was, neatly but without much deference to the fashion, Eliza thought she looked more insignificant than ever before. She felt sorry for her, but sorry as for some one who is small and pitiable. Winny had taken to her sister-inlaw, and asked with some affectionate gesture what she was about. When the big useful task was shown her—a sheet that Eliza was reversing—she smiled, and said: 'But that is too good of you-I should get them done in the next winter nights.'

Eliza replied by telling her how she had opened the parcel that she need not have touched. Winny coloured and glanced at her

mother, who said: 'Eliza thinks you might try some other publisher before you quite give up your history as a bad job, and the same thing has occurred to me. Why don't you, Winny?'

Winny's heart was vexed, but she stoically repressed her feelings, and said: 'Perhaps I will some day, when I have recovered courage to go over it again.'

- 'Some day is no day, Winny,' said Eliza. 'I should not procrastinate if I were you, but get it done out of hand. Either it is worth printing or it is not worth printing, and you may rid your mind of the hope or the encumbrance.'
- 'It lies very lightly on my mind now,' Winny answered.
- 'But it is still a weight on your mother's,' Eliza rejoined.

To this Winny said nothing with either her tongue or her eyes. She stood for a few minutes looking down on the tumbled sheet that her sister had not ceased to sew at, and then, asking quietly what she had done with the manu-

script, got for reply, that, of course, Eliza had—tied it up again, and replaced it exactly where she had found it. Winny sought it on her way upstairs, and carried it off to her eyrie.

No further remonstrance was addressed to her then, but the following day Dick, being alone with his sister, began to ask her how it happened that she had never been able to find another situation to please her since she left Hauxwell. 'Perhaps you did not want one very much?' he suggested shrewdly.

'There was something in that, Dick,' was Winny's reply. 'I don't like living in other people's houses.'

'That is rather foolish — when you were brought up to it. But you are going to take a situation now, are you not?' Dick asked.

'No—I must get on in Cotham as well as I can. I should not dream of leaving mother alone any more,' Winny said.

Dick's sallow face flushed uneasily. He was silent for a good space, and then he said:

'Eliza has a notion of staying in Cotham. She does not like London.'

Perhaps Eliza had private reasons for wishing to keep Dick out of London, but that was not mentioned. Winny understood him perfectly—his words and his confused face together. She coloured far more hotly than he did, and stared steadily out of the window without attempting any reply. Dick's spirits rose slowly to the occasion.

'Of course, I should want something to do, and the less I need it the more likely I shall be to find it,' he resumed. 'I hear that the town-librarianship is to be vacant at Christmas—Benson is old, and wants to resign. That berth would just suit me. Mr Denham is president and Mr Caleb one of the trustees. I should think their interest might be had for the asking—eh, Winny? Would your friends do so much for us?'

'Perhaps. And you would live in this house?' Winny said reflectively.

VOL. III.

'Yes. Why not? Eliza likes the house. She would wish to modernise the furniture, but mother would not object to that. She would take all the management and responsibility, and would be a great comfort to mother.'

'Then the subject has been broached to her? Perhaps it is settled?' Winny asked quickly.

'Almost it is—if I can get something to do. It would be still mother's house, and a home for you when you might choose to come. We should make one family with less expense—that is all. Eliza proposed it herself.'

Winny had grown very pale, and dared not trust herself to speak any more. She put on her bonnet, and went out by the river to think over what she had heard, and consider what she must do. She felt stunned and hurt and weak before this new and unexpected aspect of events. It was a very great shock to her, and she wanted the help of sunshine and fresh air to sustain it. The tears swelled in her eyes

without falling, and her throat ached with the restraint she had to put on her conflicting emotions. She had reproached herself more than once for absurd twinges of jealousy when she saw her mother taken in charge by Eliza, her injured wrist dressed, her comforts attended to, her conversational talents evoked, but that this serious issue should come of those little encroachments had never entered into her imagination.

And yet it had come about naturally enough. Dick had married well; his wife was proving acceptable and pleasant to his mother. Winny knew herself wanting in many of Eliza's kind and useful arts, and she was altogether without that secured income which enabled Eliza to remove the last and worst burden of anxiety from the widow's mind. Winny recognised that there was no real vacillation in her mother's sentiments. She always had been of opinion that Winny would be better off in a good situation than depending on her pen and casual lessons in Cotham, and she was of that opinion still, and made no secret of it. Eliza coincided with

her perfectly. Dick was less positive. had a perception of his sister's pain, and a sense of unfairness in ousting her from her place at home against her will. But his wife told him that was nonsense. Winny was devoted to her books: let her go, therefore, where her book-learning would be solidly appreciated. She had her living to earn, and it was her duty to take the best means of earning it, and not that which merely pleased her best. Dick had been invulnerable to all such arguments on his own account. but he thought Winny should yield to them. and it was entrusted to him to bring them before her. He led up to the subject by degrees. Eliza's discovery of the blessed history, and his mother's lament over it, had furnished a pretext to begin with.

'You must have been dull company for mother while you were slaving at that rubbish,' he said, disdaining more delicate forms of allusion. 'Eliza entertains her with what is happening in the world, and makes her look forward. Pitt's subsidies and Cromwell's

warts cannot have been very interesting, you allow.'-

Winny had laughed and blushed when Dick said this, and had remembered with something sharper than compunction how cruelly she must have bored her mother during the weary last months of writing that blessed history, when she could think and talk literally of nothing else. She remembered it again now with shame-faced annoyance. She had been selfish, ridiculous—had she any right to feel aggrieved if Eliza usurped her place? Eliza was far more practical, domesticated, and amusing. She took blame to herself, and tried to be just to Eliza.

Winny walked far along the river bank, pausing, now and then, in heaviness of spirit, and gazing abstractedly at the slow water as it ran. She thought of many things, but always her thoughts came round to the same point—that she had rested long enough, and must begin to move on again in the groove that had been cut for her.

'After all, what have I to chafe at where

trouble comes!' she asked herself—but that reflection did not quell her pain.

His sister's face disturbed Dick to look at when she reappeared. She was upstairs in her eyrie all the afternoon, having what Susan called 'a turn-out of her things.' They overheard her in the drawing-room, and conjectured what she was about. At tea Eliza asked her when she was going to send off her manuscript to London again. 'Not at present,' Winny replied. Eliza attempted to remonstrate against delay, but here Winny could speak with a will. 'I have always done my work as well as I was able, and I can mend that,' said she. 'The manuscript is half as long again as it need be, and I can abridge it on revision.'

'Indeed, Winny, but I trust you will waste no more time over it,' said her mother pleadingly.

Eliza added: 'Pray don't! Writing seems to me such an uncertain and futile thing. Teaching is more respectable in every way.'

Winny looked at her mother. 'You know,

love, that has always been my feeling,' her mother answered to her look.

It was enough—those few words gave the final blow to Winny's irresolution. It was very difficult to keep her countenance, and preserve her equanimity at the moment, but she did it: all the more difficult because her mother spoke so kindly, and with such a thorough understanding of what she felt. But it was not the widow Hesketh's way to suppose that feelings must be given in to—duty first, in all things, at all times, and in all places, and what Winny's duty was she had no doubt whatever. If Dick and his wife stayed on Castle Green, Winny could well be spared. Her mother told her this in so many words.

Winny said: 'I know you can do without me, mother—I am not indispensable. All the same, I wish it might have been me to stay at home.'

'We must bend to circumstances,' the widow replied. 'After losing three years with your pen you cannot be surprised that I have less dependence on it than ever.'

'If you take the three years together the time was not all lost. What I did besides produced me sufficient for a maintenance. I was no expense to you, mother,' Winny pleaded.

'Rather the reverse, love, but you were a constant anxiety,' rejoined her mother.

Winny brought forward a letter from an able editor who had met with an accident which temporarily suspended his work; he wrote to her as one of his contributors on whom he could best rely to provide extra copy to fill his vacant pages.

The widow read it, and said with some of her old impatient scorn of scribbling: 'But this is only a time by chance.'

Winny quietly refolded the document—it was her last card, and played in vain. 'If it must be, it must,' she said; and now her eyes were dry and her voice was firm.

'You will see it some day as I do, Winny-

that it is all for the best,' her mother assured her.

Winny did not attempt to controvert that assurance. As she had felt now several times in her life, she felt beaten, and gave up.

## CHAPTER XV.

## GETTING READY TO GO.

WHEN a thing had to be done Winny Hesketh was never one to be dilatory in doing it. She let Mrs Caradoc and Miss Peregrine-Hart know that she was again in quest of an engagement in a family, and that the further south it was from Cotham the more acceptable to her it would be. And having done this she sat still, and waited to see what came of it. She was long enough at home to be satisfied that her absence would be no loss there. Susan fell readily into the ways of Master Dick's wife, and confessed to Miss Winny that she liked a houseful, and plenty of stir about her, better than so much peace and quietness. Miss Baxter expressed her approval of what was being done; Miss Maria was not so sure of it.

'Mrs Richard may be very pretty and domestic, and all that, but give me my little Winny,' said she, petting her; and Winny somehow felt grateful, and fonder of Miss Maria than ever before.

Miss Hesketh's letters to her former pupils had given them the impression that she wished to be provided for promptly, and that she would not be too difficult to please, and this was, in fact, what Winny had sought to convey. Since it was agreed that she must leave home not a day passed without some reference to the time when she would be gone. Dick had got a pledge of the appointment to the Town Library, and the sole remaining impediment to his stay in Cotham being removed, his wife grew impatient to be busy, regulating the house in her own method. The widow pleaded with her to let things alone until Winny went, and Eliza consented, but with a secret hope that it might not be long.

'The sooner the better,' she said to Dick, who was sorrier every day; for though he saw the necessity, as he said, he could not avoid seeing that the necessity which was so easy to them was very hard upon his sister.

After her last failure with her mother Winny never breathed a word of complaint or regret again. She asked that her little room in the roof might be kept for her just as it was, and Eliza promised that it should not be touched or occupied by anybody else unless it were very much wanted, indeed—and this was the only request Winny did make. She gave way without a murmur, or even a sarcasm, to Eliza, as the future active mistress of the house. And except her pen and her private needle she had soon nothing to employ her. She watched for the post almost as eagerly as in the days before she was launched at all; and, now as then, though both her young friends were on look-out for her, there were abortive negotiations and delay upon delay.

While still at liberty she received a call from Miss Forbes, who was spending a week at the Manor, and, with her usual philosophical humour, Winny sought consolation for her own lot by comparing it with poor Maggie's. Years had passed since they parted at the old school, and they had never met since. Winny was very much like her early self still; Maggie was altered, matured, aged, even. Her countenance had its fretted expression, and her voice its querulous, high tone, familiar in times gone by. Her dress was that of a rich lady. It was rare that any one so sumptuous mounted the stairs to the antiquated drawing-room on Castle Green. Winny had forgotten, or, perhaps, had never known, whether Miss Forbes was rich or poor, but the truth was patent now.

They kissed one another as women do, and Maggie said to her former companion: 'I should have known your pretty, wistful eyes anywhere. And you look scarcely an hour older. That comes of living a simple life.'

'But I have a right to look older,' Winny replied. 'My life is simple enough; but I have been ill once, I have had my troubles often, and I have worked hard always.'

'I mean that you have kept clear of jealousies, rivalries, and miserable contentions. You should see Nina Mostyn — Madame Saldanha—to know what that means. She is as haggard and spent as a woman of forty.'

'Poor soul! And how wags the world with yourself, Maggie?'

'Sadly,' was the disconsolate answer. 'I have lost everybody who belonged to me—I had only papa when I was at school, and he married again last year. I did not like my stepmother, and she did not like me; so, as I was past my majority, and in possession of mamma's fortune, I left home. I am living at Rockbro'. Will you come and see me, Miss Winifred? It will be a real charity.'

'Some day I will. You were very good to me at school,' Winny said.

'Was I? I used to admire your pluck in standing out against Miss Hubbard. How she did bully us! What a life she led you! I never hated any one so much.'

Winny laughed: 'Oh, I have forgiven her long since—we were almost friendly before I left school. And you have that dreadful ache still, Maggie? You suffer a great deal?'

'A perfect martyrdom. I have made up my mind that it is the cross I have to bear.' Enviable woman you are, that can do something for the good of your fellow-creatures! I often wish I could; and it seems easy enough until I try. I could fancy I hear you speaking in your books, and I recognise many descriptive bits about Cotham. How do you contrive to be so natural? You have drawn old Hollingshed to the very life.'

'Please, don't say so,' remonstrated Winny seriously. 'The beauty of authorship is, that it allows one to lead a humdrum, private life—the misery is, that unless one draws a bow at a venture amongst scenes and people beyond one's ken some, Mrs Candour is sure to pick out the ugly traits in the imperfect characters, and ascribe them to mutual friends and

acquaintances. If I designed an accomplished female rascal, and afflicted her with neuralgia for her sins, Mrs Candour would discover in it a likeness to you, and credit need to with malice prépense.'

'That would not be pleasant. But I do not see why you should vex yourself because vulgar busy-bodies are rife in society. There is no malice in your sketch of old Hollingshed—he was a dear old man. He used to say to me at every lesson: "I am afraid, Miss Forbes, you are in pain to-day?"—the only creature besides yourself who seemed to realise that my pain was painful. I suppose the others all got used to it, and it bored them. I am a weariful woman, indebted to anybody who shows me patience.'

Winny offered her the comfort of a reminder that she had it in her power to show kindness in return.

'Yes, thank God!' said she. 'It is a setoff against my thorn in the flesh. Miss Patrick has accepted an invitation to my house for October—you remember Pat, poor Pat? "A nice cataclysm she has come to," says Mrs Lassells—that is her revenge for Pat's ancient reflections on her spelling. You have heard, perhaps, that Pat has turned lecturer, reader of plays, and teacher of elocution? She is anxious to meet you again—she thinks you might be of service to one another as public characters.'

Winny peremptorily declined the name of a public character. Miss Forbes apologised, and asked if she could meet Miss Patrick at her house next month. Winny was not in a position to promise that; and Maggie said, then they would leave it open, and she must come if she could: Rockbro' was charming in October, and a sea-change would tone her up for the winter. To the young lady of fortune, accustomed to luxury of surroundings, this old house on Castle Green appeared a poor and gloomy place. She pitied Winny Hesketh because her lot had been cast there; while Winny, with the prospect looming daily nearer that she must leave it, imagined that she had VOL. III. S

been happier there than she could ever be elsewhere.

This visit from Miss Forbes gratified her-Youth is intense in its loves and friendships = middle-age is more prudent and expansive. Winny was beginning to feel that it is wiser to bestow our treasure in divers caskets than to hoard it all up in one or two. She was letting the days flow by her now under a sense of the folly of much striving. Her mother believed she was fretting, but, indeed, the tears she shed were very few. She fretted inwardly, and had a terrible consciousness upon her of the tedium and loneliness of life. When she thought of her last humiliation—of how little she was wanted and would be missed at home-her eyes smarted and her throat swelled: but she was able to reason down the jealous pang. She knew that these pangs of the heart would find their alleviation in the wear and tear of time, because there was no bitterness or resentment in them, and no remorse to keep their sting alive.

And at length came the opportunity that

she waited for. A situation was offered to her through Miss Peregrine-Hart in a family with some of whose members she had become acquainted at Hauxwell. It was not a situation as governess, but as amanuensis, secretary, companion—what-not? A letter from the eldest daughter to her dear friend Isobel was forwarded to Castle Green as the most explicit means of communication. Thus it ran:—

'If such a proposition ought not to be made to Miss Hesketh, do not mention it to her, but if she would be likely to accept it papa and mamma are of one mind that she would suit them. She could write her books at Morevale as well as elsewhere, and Morevale, you must know, was always distinguished for its patronage of literary people. Her duties would not be very severe. Writing for papa would be the chief thing (his poor hand is as powerless as ever) and to read to him sometimes, and then to walk out with me. Katie has been his amanuensis, and when we lose her in November, it would be vain to depend

on me to fill her place. Still, if I had to live by my wits, and were a bright and clever young person, I should greatly prefer papa's study to a school-room. She would see plenty of people, and hear everything that is going on in the world, and I think we should be pleasant to each other. We will speak of the salary if there is any chance of her coming to us.'

Winny made up her mind at once to take this situation irrespective of salary. She had a prejudice against being patronised by grand people, but she knew their patronage would fall off from her very soon, and the quietude of her life being broken up she had a healthy resolve to avert another course of monotony if circumstances favoured her. Morevale was a famous old place, and Mr Rippon, its master, a man of considerable eminence once; though now, perhaps, dropping rather out of note. Miss Hesketh had enjoyed a walk with him at Hauxwell, when she listened with intelligence to his conversation; and he had referred to it afterwards on seeing a book of hers in his wife's hand. For over a year past he had been

disabled from the use of his pen by scrivener's cramp, and his younger daughter who had supplied his want was about to marry, when Miss Peregrine-Hart mentioned her former governess as seeking a situation not too laborious. There was then a question of finding Miss Clara a substitute.

'I think Miss Hesketh would do, mamma,' Miss Rippon suggested.

Mamma answered: 'Ask your papa—it is of more consequence to him than to you or me.'

Papa demurred to the suggestion that he fancied Miss Hesketh was a person to whom liberty was sweet—and even if necessity obliged her to enter a strange family, she would expect a higher salary than he wished to pay.

'We can but ask her, papa,' said his daughter.
'It would be cheaper and, in some respects, more convenient to have the curate for an hour or two in the morning—but you do not like the curate—and he would be of no use as a walking companion for me.'

Mr Rippon would not have the curate. Miss Hesketh would suit him very well: 'I recollect remarking in her an openness of mind, and a high degree of intelligence,' he said; and committed the conduct of the negotiation to his womenkind.

The result was satisfactory. Winny got the letter that concluded it at breakfast, and read it out for the benefit of the company.

'You will not be wanted until after the wedding—not until the middle or end of November,' said Dick's wife, in an accent that betrayed annoyance at the deferred date of the engagement.

The widow Hesketh coloured and looked at her daughter deprecatingly. Winny seemed inobservant, but her ears were quick and sensitive enough. She gazed out of the window which framed the beautiful blue sky of an early autumn morning, and said: 'No, I shall not be wanted at Morevale until the beginning of the winter—not for six or eight weeks. And so, mother, I will take the opportunity of going to

Skipton to see Mildred. I know she will like to have me.'

'I do not think you could do better, Winny,' replied the widow, and there was quite a sense of relief all round the table.

Winny Hesketh's previous departures from home had been reluctant, but not one was so reluctant or sad as this. The curtain had come down on the narrow stage of her youth, the play was played out, and the lights were being turned off. She foresaw that home would never again be home to her in the sense that it had been, and she spent much time in making her preparations accordingly. She sat in her window-seat by the hour together, most at ease when alone; and musing, which somebody has defined as thinking of nothing. Well-her reverie was vague: there was no joy of remembrance in it, and no eagerness of anticipation. Her mother would mount to her eyrie when her absence was unusually prolonged, and ask if she was not coming down soon: 'You have not long to be with us now, Winny,' she would And Eliza would arrive too, with the say.

elder-sisterly airs to which her experience entitled her, and offers of help which Winny declined with urbanity.

She never misconceived her mother, and the more she thought of the discouragement she had given her in the failure of that blessed history the more simple and natural did it seem that she should be required to give up her pen, and betake herself to the vocation she had been trained for, and the service of other persons. But her silence spoke to her mother's heart, and her efforts at careless gaiety were pathos itself.

'Don't be so unhappy, love,' the widow said to her the last evening she had to spend on Castle Green.

'I am not unhappy, mother,' Winny replied.
'Mrs Wedge has sent me a warm chest-protector of her own knitting, and a little good book to read in the train to-morrow.'

Dick and his wife were both there. After a pause Mrs Hesketh began to say in a tremulous voice which she steadied with difficulty: 'There are a few words I wish to mention while

we are all here together. I made my will some years ago, and it is not my intention to alter it. I have left Winny what I have.'

'This house too, mother?' cried Dick impulsively.

Before her mother could answer, Winny said, 'Better give it to Dick, mother. I shall never come to Cotham to live,' and she got up, and went out.

Eliza gave Dick a monitory look, and the widow said no more of her will.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE END OF A LONG DREAM.

WINNY HESKETH did not show that she was unhappy the next morning when she went away. She was busy to the end, perhaps, on purpose. She would not leave a dull impression behind her.

'She's plucked up her spirit again, bless my joy,' said Nanny Anson, who had made an errand over with some fine apples.

Dick took his sister to the station. He was rather serious and uneasy. When Winny was in the carriage he had evidently a difficult word to say. It came out with a jerk at last: 'You don't think it unfair, and that we have turned you out, Winny, do you?'

'Not a bit, Dick, not a bit! I know Eliza will be good to mother, and that is all I care

for,' Winny replied with a cheerfulness that quite disabused him of his fear.

'All right, Winny! And I hope you will like Morevale.' Winny was not to return to Cotham from Skipton. She was to go from Southmead to Miss Forbes at Rockbro', and then to her situation.

Susan was singing in the kitchen to put off her sorrow, and Mrs Hesketh had gone up to Winny's deserted room when Dick got back home. He mounted the stairs to announce that he had seen his sister safe off on her journey. His mother heard what he had to say, but said nothing herself; and Eliza suggested, when he told her, that they had better not talk about Winny just yet. And they did not.

Mildred Jarvis welcomed her friend with open arms and open heart. Her two little boys were out of her arms, and established firmly on their own feet, and being of stout temper, they left their mother an interval of more complete leisure than she had yet enjoyed since she was married. Winny con-

gratulated them both upon it. Mr Frank Jarvis was in the town all day at business, and the two friends sat chiefly in a small upper room, called the work-room, which had two windows, one looking on the lawn where the children sported round their nurse, and the other up the road by which the master came and went to the town. It was his wife's practice to walk to the gate with him, and watch till he was out of sight in the morning, and at the last point from which he could descry her, he would stop and wave his hand: and when six o'clock struck in the evening her eyes turned ever and anon in that direction to catch the first glimpse of his returning home. It was a very happy young household, and Winny felt the charm of the love that reigned there as a most restful and ' sweet influence. And there were other influences too. It was a growing life. The drawing-room table was well furnished with new books, reviews, magazines, with music, and novelties that make talk. Mildred's mind was free of the nursery again, none the

worse or weaker for its rest there. But it was still her way to dilate copiously on all matters of personal concern—the dear goodness of Frank and his appreciation of herself, the interesting age of her boys and her proud hopes of their future, the emergencies of housekeeping, the plague of servants, and the minute rivalries that were bubbles on the sluggish surface of society as constituted in Skipton. The friends had been together several days, and each and all of these threads had been strained to tenuity before Mildred remembered to ask Winny of her own affairs, and these never got themselves told but in a parenthetic way. There were questions Winny would have liked to put, but somehow. the opportunity did not arise—or she was shy and afraid of putting them. It was not until the day before she was to leave Southmead that she learnt as news something that other people were already forgetting.

Mildred was pleased with the prospect of Morevale for her friend; she thought such a situation was just suited to her. 'You are so much softer than you were, Winny,' said she caressingly. 'I suppose you know that? And children are tyrants at the best—they would half kill you now.'

'Oh no! I should take some killing—my health is perfect,' Winny said.

'You do not look very robust—but never mind, if they are good to you at Morevale. There is only one thing that would win my approval more, and that is that you would give yourself to think of marrying.'

'My dear Milly, nobody wants to marry me that I know of, and I am sure, I don't want to marry anybody. I have seen but two persons in my life with whom I have thought it would be perfectly happy to live.'

'Leonard Durant was one—who was the other, Winny? I never heard there was a second,' said Mildred, interested.

'The second was my mother,' answered Winny with a smile.

Mildred said nothing to this, but seemed absorbed in arranging the tucks of a diminutive muslin garment. Winny's pulse still quickened at the name of Mr Durant. She turned her head! aside, and gazed out of the window. Mildred took a sad, furtive observation of her face—something was on her lips to say, but she did not say it. Winny was the first to speak again: 'Is there anybody living at Rushmead now?' she inquired.

'Yes, a cousin of poor Durant's. It has been restored, and done up. They say he is going to bring a wife there.'

Winny continued to gaze towards the town. Mildred came behind her, put her arm round her neck, and leant down her face against hers with infinite tenderness: 'Did not you know, Winny?' whispered she.

- 'Know what?' Winny asked with a strangling pain in her throat.
  - 'That Leonard Durant was dead?'
- 'No. Never a word of it, Milly, never a word!'
  - 'Where does this river go?'
- 'Down to the sea, where all rivers go. What are you thinking of, Winny?'

It was only the afternoon of the day when Mildred had told her that Mr Durant was dead. They had gone out into the country under the warm autumnal shadows of the beech woods that clothe the banks of the Skipton river. It is a shallow river of eddies and turmoil, and huge encumbering stones in these, its higher reaches, but wide and slow, and navigable for the traffic of towns in its lower course.

There was a long silence. Winny's cheeks were pale, her eyes burning, smarting, weary with tears. Presently she said in a voice, low and uncertain: 'I shall not go to Rockbro' tomorrow, Milly—I must get away by myself somewhere for a day or two first.'

- 'Stay here—O Winny, don't run off in your trouble—don't!'
- 'But it will be easier. I can't speak without crying—you see I can't. I daresay it is silly, but I cannot help it.'
  - 'What will Frank say?'
  - 'Don't tell him until I am gone.'

Winny had not asked many questions of

the how, the when, or the where of Mr Durant's death, and, indeed, Mildred could not have told her. The news was old when she heard it, and had come in a brief notice through his agent in London who had sent it on to Rushmead with a request that it might be communicated to his relatives and others whom it concerned. Nobody ever thought of Winny Hesketh as one whom it might concern. Even Mildred had said only that Winny would be sorry if she knew. And it was not until she witnessed her passion of grief that she at all realised how sorry.

However, it was true, and that was the end of Winny Hesketh's long dream. She had laughed and made fun many a time since Leonard Durant was laid in mould, and when she got away by herself, as she said, and into a strange place, she grieved down into quietness sooner than had seemed likely. She chose a famous city where the music in the great church was beautiful, and when she walked about the old walls and streets of it she was able to meditate of the past times of her life and the VOL. III.

years to come with hourly growing serenity. Never a day had gone over her head since she first met Mr Durant that she had not given him some place in her thoughts. Never a day would go over her head that he would not come back to her remembrance—her unvexed, her tender remembrance.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## NOT SO DULL AS IT SEEMS.

No one ever spoke of Winny Hesketh as a religious person, but in the course of her life she seemed to enjoy a large share of that inward peace that belongs to the sober religious mind. She never wished to exchange the pinch of her own shoes for the apparent ease of her neighbours, or called her lot hard. If she had indulged in visions of a brighter and better lot in some remote future, such visions were over for her, and the veil that had dropt between her and them when Mr Durant died, shut out all but the near prospect of the work that was to be begun on the morrow. Henceforward it was her philosophy to take short views of life.

After a while she went to Rockbro', and fulfilled her promise to Miss Forbes, and met

Miss Patrick. The visit was less prolonged than Maggie had anticipated, but the weather was breaking up towards winter, and being kept much indoors, they had the more of each other's society.

Miss Patrick was full, poor soul, of the bitter concern of a lady plunged into sudden poverty, and unprovided with any vocation to steady her under the shock. For that reading and preaching on platforms did not pay. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and her heart being filled with the chill misery of unaccustomed needs and anxiety, her lips overflowed with them continually. Her friends had much helpful sympathy for her, but it is difficult effectually to help those who will not help themselves, and Miss Patrick was a lady of this sort.

'I used to say that I thought it would be delightful to be independent, and to earn the bread I ate, but I find it anything but delightful,' she would reiterate in various forms of words. 'This work-a-day world is a cruel world to women like me. There seems no

room for us in it. You bore the yoke in your youth, Miss Winifred, and lucky you, to whom custom has made it light! Now though you must work, you seem to live and move in an atmosphere of repose. Whatever I set myself to do, I feel hurried and driven, and never sure of my ability to hold out.'

'Oh, but you have plenty of power, and, at least, as much knowledge as I had when we left school. I am ashamed when I think what I began to teach on. If I were in your place I should go into training at one of the Government schools,' Winny suggested on one occasion.

Miss Patrick's pride demurred—she did not wish to fall into a lower rank (she held herself still as more noble than Winny Hesketh, because her father had been once of independent means, and the Heskeths were poor and of no account in Cotham), and also she could not afford to stand idle for a year: she must be earning money somehow—and even at the Government training-schools there would be fees to pay.

'If the fees were the only obstacle, I think the old Manor girls would join to see you through the course,' Winny said—for being exiled from household charges she was again a rich and easy woman, and ready to help a former comrade in a strait.

'Indeed, Pat, but I will see you through the course myself,' cried Miss Forbes. 'I'll put off my pony-carriage. I really do not care about it —I would rather hire.'

There again Miss Patrick's pride demurred—she would not accept such a sacrifice from anybody—and this was peremptory.

Winny asked her how much Latin she had, observing further: 'I know you were Mr Hollingshed's joy at sums.'

'If you are proposing to make me a boys' governess, I hate teaching, and that is the plain truth,' the poor lady avowed with impetuous frankness.

'You are rather impracticable, Pat,' quoth Maggie.'

Winny Hesketh knew not what more to say. Miss Patrick was enrolling herself one of the sad legion of ladies in adversity, and it seemed as if her pride would keep her in its ranks to her life's end. Winny Hesketh's experience was that if you want money, you have to work for it, but Miss Forbes knew how poor, proud ladies will bear all the slights of friends and fortune rather than incur the stigma of work. In another conversation Miss Patrick said she should not object to such an appointment as Miss Winifred had accepted with the Rippons of Morevale, providing always that the honorarium were adequate.

Miss Forbes smiled despairingly, and said: 'Now, Pat, be reasonable—do people employ and pay incompetent gentlefolks, when proved, good workmen are to be had? You know they don't. Show what you are worth, and then claim your value.'

Winny mentioned that she was to receive a salary of a hundred a year, adding: 'It is a liberal salary, but it will not be paid me for doing nothing. Mr Rippon knows what he wants, and he has an idea what I can do. When I began the world old Mam'zell at Hall

Green gave me a piece of good advice: she said, "Make yourself worth money—make yourself worth money"—and so I have done, by sheer industry. You can do the same if you will.'

But Miss Patrick shook her disconsolate, ruffled head: 'No, I cannot, it is not in me to be a drudge,' she said with an air of superior quality. 'You do not understand the feelings I was brought up in, Miss Winifred—and how should you?'

Winny offered no further remonstrance, and she left Miss Patrick at Rockbro', prolonging her visit to Miss Forbes until some other kind friend sent her an invitation, and accommodating herself easily enough to her present ease.

Morevale was not quite a Paradise, but Winny Hesketh never recognised that she was otherwise than happy there. Life in Mr Rippon's study was peaceful and tranquil. He walked up and down with his hands behind him, and she wrote to his dictation.—And she went on writing her own books as Miss Rippon had given her notice she would be able to do, and saw a great many people, and heard most of what was going on in the world. Mr Rippon found her intelligent and not soon tired; the ladies of the house liked her—said she was full of tact and did not give herself airs.

She went home to Cotham for a few weeks' holiday when she had been nearly two years at Morevale. Dick's wife had a little girl of fifteen months old, and the widow Hesketh was a happy grandmother. They were all very comfortable together on Castle Green. But Eliza said one day that Winny was: 'Quite the visitor,' and Dick, rather huffed and disconcerted by her quiet manners, professed to be afraid that she was turning into a fine lady.

Except that Winny declined adventitious aids for the improvement of her figure, and continued to wear her hair as she had worn it from a girl, her aspect was that of a prosperous woman who does not need to stint her least necessary expenses. Her mother approved

her taste, and was satisfied with her success in the world, at last. But, quoth Dick: 'I never call a woman a success who does not marry.'

'No,' said Dick's wife, lifting her child into her lap.

'Success consists in our own feeling, and not in other people's opinion,' said the widow Hesketh

Winny said nothing. Before her return to Morevale her mother appealed to her whether she did not think now her going there had been for good.

Winny made answer: 'I am content, mother; but the interests I have to cultivate are all intellectual, and perhaps, rather isolating. I feel sometimes as if I might live not to care for anything else much—and that would be a pity.'

'That would be dreary, indeed,' said her mother.

It was, nevertheless, the inevitable outcome of her daily existence. The mind becomes imbued with what it works in, and habit has no irksomeness. A few years more and Winny was ready to say that her life suited her entirely, that she wished for nothing better, nothing different, until even regret for Cotham passed away. When circumstances enabled Mr Rippon to dispense with his amanuensis Winny made herself a home in the south, antedating old Mam'zell's era of liberty with propriety by two years, and was not long in discovering that interests sufficient for it gather round every independent centre. She lived with friends old and new, still in this work-aday world, with her task for every day to do, and found it by no means so dull as it seems.

Her brown hair was already lined with white, and she went about her business freely and independently, fearing no criticism and hearing none. Still kind, presumptuous Mrs Wedges beset her path with thorny counsels, and she had her painful experience, like her elders and betters in the walks of fiction, of the mischief busy-idle Mrs Candours can stir up in all communities. But, on the whole, her life was peaceful and pleasant, and she was

never able to throw herself feelingly into the vexed question of woman's rights.

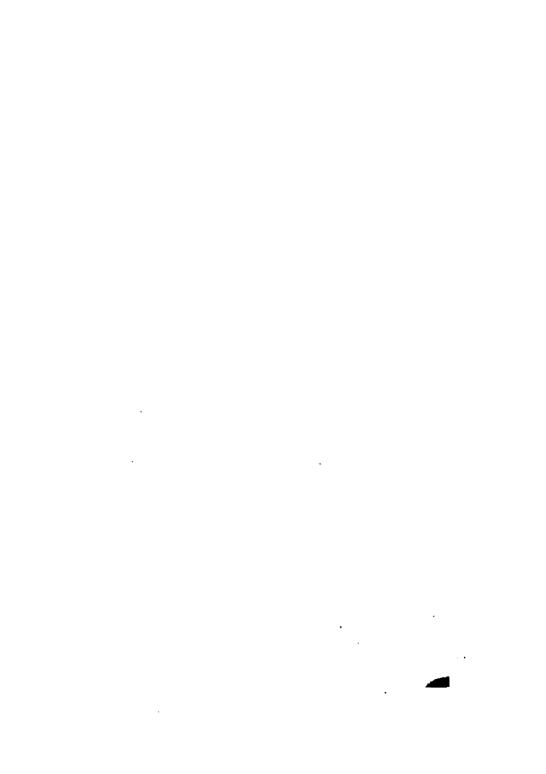
In the course of time, she fell in with one family of her rich relations, and then with another, and found them willing to be friendly. She was not such a stranger to them as she had imagined. One tall, north-country cousin shewed her in his library a small shelf of books in morocco and gold-all her own books; she could hardly believe her eyes. There was plenty of money amongst her kinsfolk, and brains too. Her young second-cousins were flourishing then at Rugby, Harrow, Eton, Oxford-making ready to do good work in the world. She was, however, the only woman of their connection who had to live by her brains, and she was accounted rather proud, odd, crotchetty. Her development was one-sided, but she preserved her individuality, was called sociable and affectionate, but come an injustice, a wrong in her way, and she could and did withstand it as fearlessly as ever she set her face against tyranny in her youth. The consequence was that, with some warm

friends, there were others who feared more than they loved her—a not uncommon result where a woman has any character at all, and frankly declines to be ruled by the vulgar maxims of worldly wisdom.

THE END.

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